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Joseph Conrad: A Reinterpretation of Five Novels¹

H. T. WEBSTER²

IT HAS been apparent for some years that Joseph Conrad's works would outlive those of most of his Edwardian contemporaries. It is now equally evident that they survive much better than the literary meteors of the interwar days. His pages retain their old capacity to enchant, repel, or merely bore, according to the reader's taste. The prose still has a firm, sure texture marred by none of the journalistic extravagances of the "brilliant writers." It is amazingly varied and pliant, ranging from what contemporary reviewers are calling the "stripped style" (Conrad would have called it the "phrase coupé") to a sumptuous eloquence not far from poetry of the second order. As for his matter, the lines that he himself wrote to his agent Pinker still hold good:

¹ In addition to several common editions of Conrad's works and the familiar *Life and Letters* (1927) edited by G. Jean-Aubry, the following books had some part in this article: M. C. Bradbrook, *Joseph Conrad, Poland's English Genius* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1941); Edward Crankshaw, *Joseph Conrad, Some Aspects of the Art of the Novel* (London: John Lane, 1936); and John Dozier Gordon, *Joseph Conrad, the Making of a Novelist* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940).

² Department of English, Temple University (on military leave).

"One may read everybody and in the end want to read me—for a change if nothing else. For I don't resemble anybody and yet I am not specialized enough to call up imitators as to matter or style. There is nothing in me but a turn of mind which, whether valueless or worthless, cannot be imitated."³

Moreover, his literary survival is not an affair of one or two books. He is remembered by a considerable body of his work—the fact soberly attested by the variety of the anthologist's selections and by the modest but continuing sale of a number of volumes. He left almost nothing that is unreadable and little that would not seem good in its own right if he had not written better. Though he lived by his pen, he was literally incapable of shoddy work. He remarks in a letter: "While I am writing I am not thinking of money. I couldn't if I would. The thing once written I admit that I want to see it bring in as much money as possible."⁴

If the years have largely confirmed the esteem of his first admirers, they

³ *Life and Letters*, II, 54.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

have not entirely clarified his position in the literature of his adopted country or of the world. His early critics praised him as a writer of sea stories, as a local colorist of the exotic isles, as a latter-day avatar of the Sir Thomas Browne tradition, and as an incomparable raconteur, a sort of fuller-bodied, more copious Prosper Mérimée. Conrad was not satisfied with these definitions of his writing. He did not consider his more ambitious works purely as narratives. He wrote in a letter to Henry S. Canby: "'Youth' has been called a fine sea story. Is it? Well, I won't bore you with a discussion of fundamentals, but surely those stories of mine can be looked at from another angle";⁵ and again to F. N. Doubleday: "A work of art is not a logical demonstration, carrying its intention on the face of it."⁶ In brief, it is clear that his stories, no less than these of Gide and Mann, were intended to have intellectual content and a direct application to human behavior. Often he felt that his critics and readers missed, or inadequately understood, this "intention" that was not "on the face of it."

The misapprehension is due partly to the fact that his early critics quoted passages like that in the Preface to *Chance*, in which he denies any "didactic" purpose, without including the lines that follow: "But every subject in the region of intellect and emotion must have a morality of its own if it is treated at all sincerely, and even the most artful of writers will give himself and his morality away in about every third sentence."⁷ Conrad writes under a special set of conventions which impose another difficulty on his reader. As one who spent his childhood in the midst of a feudal nobility

and his active years on the far frontiers of empire, he is the product of a very different world from that of his fellow-writers. The frontier in particular, whether it was the Dodge City or the Sourabaya of the 1880's, combined that prudish delicacy of speech and casual acceptance of violence and unconventionality which are characteristic of his work. In addition to these more or less circumstantial impediments to easy understanding, we must admit others that are part of the intimate fabric of the author. That "turn of mind" of his habitually ignored the obvious. He has no interest in the expected development and leaves us to fill it in with human probabilities. Finally, his major works are so closely constructed that they must be perused carefully and completely, for they are artistic unities that cannot be judged by isolated passages and special characteristics.

Conrad's conscious intent and unconscious creative impulse is definitively stated in the most celebrated phrases of the celebrated Preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*: "To make you hear, to make you feel—before all to make you see." And, if this is accomplished, you will find also "that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask." The "truth" is not merely the faithful representation of a given situation. Conrad is no "coin de la nature vu au travers d'un tempérament" man. Rather, he means by the word that the personal experience of his characters contains a general human significance. This general human significance is inseparable from the narrative, which has an element of the parable or fable in it, and it is seldom stated apart from it. Occasionally he illuminates his meaning with a brief flash of rhetoric as in that agonizing conclusion to the

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 342.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ "Author's Note" to *Chance*.

short story, "Tomorrow": "It was as if all the hopeful madness of the world had broken out to bring terror upon her heart, with the voice of that old man shouting of his trust in an everlasting tomorrow." Then one marvels that one could have failed to be conscious of the universality of Captain Hagberd, who waits throughout life for a tomorrow that has come and gone unrecognized. But, for the most part, the author's meanings are diffused in the intimate structure of his tales.

The method that he uses is as old as the folk tale, but he gives it new subtlety and scope. It has the advantage of greater artistic unity and concentration than is possible where the narrative flow is interrupted by an author's personal comments and of more life and movement than is likely to occur when a character serves as *raisonneur*. Not that one supposes Conrad selected his method of expressing himself for its merits alone. He remarks in one of his letters to Edward Garnett: "My thought is always multiple."⁸ It is as natural for him to unfold simultaneously a plot, an analysis of human behavior, a shifting panorama of sense impressions sometimes interesting in their own right, and a fable, as it is for Shaw to write his plays in terms of debate. Indeed, the debate is the simple, classic expression of the reasoning mind, and the fable that of the intuitive one.

The Nigger of the Narcissus, to which the famous Preface is attached, is one of the finest expressions of Conrad's multiplicity of mind as it is one of the most completely satisfying of his works. With the *Youth* volume, it is the most inspired product of his early period. Its author always held it in special regard. He wrote of it: "Candidly I think it has certain

qualities of art that make it a thing apart. I tried to get through the veil of details at the essence of life."⁹ Most critics of this novel have found it more than a record of sea life, but they have not satisfactorily defined its inner meaning. Frequently it has been dismissed as a study of the psychological effect of James Wait on the other sailors. Nothing could be wider the mark. Conrad's incident was almost ready-made for him on the psychological side, and its effect was so true to pattern that it required no special study. Here his exceptional personal experience needs a note of explanation. Malingering is a peculiar problem at sea. It is, one supposes, not more widespread afloat than ashore, but its consequences are more serious, for work cannot be postponed on shipboard and slackness results in mortal peril to all. Conrad, writing the story but three years after he had left the sea, saw his subject through the sailor's eyes. Thus the initial situation of James Wait's supposed malingering, which may strike the reader as inflated out of insignificance, comes into proper focus. The reaction of the crew to the "nigger" and his illness was likewise a commonplace part of Conrad's early experience, though it is raised to the level of whimsical fantasy in the novel. Everyone who has come in contact with isolated groups of simple men knows that they are likely to be swept from time to time by such exaggerated sentiments of sympathy or dislike. So are children for that matter, though with children the sentiment is usually quickly terminated by a new interest, while men such as those on the "Narcissus" have nothing to interrupt the riding of the hobbyhorse.

We find in the story a beautiful counterpoint of literary impulse. In the early

⁸ *Life and Letters*, II, 59.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

pages the illness of James Wait and its exaggerated effect upon the crew serves as a focus for the everyday life on an old-time sailing vessel and of the men who sailed on her. Conrad spoke of the book as "a decent edifice to enshrine my old chums"; and, indeed, many of the pages have a special intimate quality that is not found in his later novels. The life of the ship takes on paramount importance when the great storm is encountered as the "Narcissus" rounds the Cape of Good Hope, and James Wait is almost forgotten by the crew and reader alike. Then that dwarfed Iago, Donkin, thrusts Jimmy Wait again into the foreground and the question of the plot is clearly posed: Is the nigger of the "Narcissus" ill or is he shamming? This theme is developed through an introductory phase in which the crew believes that Wait is ill, while Wait thinks that he is not, to the major statement in which the crew believes that he is shamming while Wait himself fights against the knowledge that his illness is both real and mortal.

And what of the "truth" which we may glimpse, according to the Preface? James Wait, with his pathetic disbelief in his mortal illness, his belief that he can, by an assertion of will, recover strength and life, surely has this in common with all humanity: that he walks through life carrying the seeds of his own mortality in his breast, so that each day of living is also a day of partial dying, and each renewal of life is, in fact, illusory and but so much more vitality surrendered in the hopeless fight. The Nigger is rendered to us in such artful individuality—a St. Kitts blackamoor in every phrase—that we are dazzled by the surface and only recognize in retrospect that he is all people who can never reconcile themselves to death and never cope with it. Donkin, too, has more than an

individual significance. To explain him, we must shift our view of James Wait a little. We are entitled to do this in an art which "must aspire to the plasticity of sculpture—the magic suggestiveness of music." James Wait represents a humanity which will inevitably be defeated by death, but he is also an individual who freely chooses all terms of defeat but the final bitter reality of it. Donkin is the advocate of this capitulation, the advocate of an easy shirking life, which leads to a death without honor. Such is the underlying fable of *The Nigger of the Narcissus*.

Conrad is less fortunate in certain more immediate and explicit meanings. He puts words of protest against economic injustice in the mouth of the abominable Donkin, which do little damage to the aesthetic unity of *The Nigger of the Narcissus* but are an important clue to a weakness in *Nostromo*. For Conrad's major intellectual weakness was his complete failure to understand the advanced political and economic ideas available to him in his lifetime. This failure is amply attested by his letters. It produced inferior works like *The Informer*, *An Anarchist*, *Under Western Eyes*, and *The Secret Agent*. The last has the merit of being a good Hitchcock thriller, but in these tales, generally, the writer expresses notions which are irreconcilable with his aspirations to speak the larger truths of humanity. Viewed most charitably, they represent, like Swift's idea of experimental science, only a qualified and distorted truth which must be rejected as irrelevant to the basic issues.

The Heart of Darkness was Joseph Conrad's emotional reaction to imperialism; *Nostromo* was his reasoned interpretation of the same subject. The former work is concerned chiefly with the

effect of conquest and exploitation on one of the exploiters. It is a portrait, set in an elaborately suggestive background, of a man hollowed out by the inner corrosion of amoral power; indeed, it seems to have suggested T. S. Eliot's well-known "The Hollow Men," for Eliot quotes the line, "Mistah Kurtz, he dead," at the beginning of his poem. But *Nostromo* treats both exploiters and exploited; it is an attempt to comprehend the full range of the subject. Although not very long as novels go, it is, as one would suppose, very complicated.

One is irresistibly reminded of Lincoln Steffens' *Autobiography* as one reads *Nostromo*, for its author, writing at the time Steffens was beginning his investigation of the relationship between government and economic society, had imaginatively sensed what Steffens came to know later. But, unfortunately, Conrad was working in a field where he was already *parti pris*, and one-half of his imagining is withered from its inception. The imperialists in *Nostromo* are represented as plainly and unequivocally wrong—this Conrad's intuition and his personal experience told him—but Conrad can imagine as forces of active opposition to them only clownish scoundrels whose greatest merit is that they are less ineffectual than the comic-strip radicals of *The Informer* and *The Secret Agent*. One must, therefore, believe that the author misapprehended the essential forces at work.

The vividness of the South American setting of *Nostromo* has provoked a good deal of praise. The setting is indeed well done, but only as an ingenious stage property. The characters are all transplanted Europeans, and the problems that concern them are engendered in the banking-houses of Europe and the United States. The story, with appropriate

changes of scenery, could have been placed in many countries. The Balkans or the Near East would have served as well as South America.

When a famous political boss asked Lincoln Steffens to explain to him why what he did was wrong, Steffens told him that he and others like him betrayed to the privileged the interests of the common people, whose natural leaders they were. Such a betrayal was the story that Conrad had to tell in *Nostromo*. Gian' Battista Fidanza, an Italian sailor of superior energy, resolution, and natural intelligence, had settled in the South American republic of Costaguana, where he became the idol of the Italian immigrants and of the native population who worked on the waterfront. He used this influence to make himself the faithful and indispensable servant of the European and American interests in the country. To these gentry he was "Nostromo," "our man." When an English railway owner must be guided through perilous parts of the interior, Nostromo was the man to do it. When riots and political disorder threatened the Europeans in Costaguana, Nostromo arranged that his cargadores were found on their side. This reputation for complete fidelity to the European exploiters of the country became for Gian' Battista a matter of profound vanity. When he was reproached for having become the creature of the English, he replied: "Is it my fault that I am the only man for their purposes?"

In contrast to Nostromo's opportunism and obsession with the bubble reputation is set Giorgio Viola, the old Garibaldino. The Garibaldino was blindly devoted to the memory of a man—Garibaldi—and to an ideal liberty. But he could not separate the ideal from the man or recognize it in its later forms. His was

an intellectual failure, as Nostromo's was a moral one. Thus when a revolution occurred in Costaguana, the Garibaldino was a passive victim of it instead of a leader who tried to give form to the social ferment that produced it.

The story of how Nostromo ceased to be "our man" and became one of the exploiters himself through the theft of a boatload of silver is the dominant motif of several closely interwoven themes. The concluding account of his betrothal to one daughter of the Garibaldino and his love for the other is pendant to the body of the novel and could easily be made into a separate short story. This book is not, like *Lord Jim*, a tale of lost honor. What the title character has lost is not honor but an illusion. Like Kurtz, he becomes hollowed out (T. S. Eliot gives the word). Having discovered that one ideal is paltry, he fails to pick up the jewel that lies close at hand: the same fidelity to his own people—the workers—that he had accorded to the masters of the land.

Nostromo is much more the tale of a country and an economic process than of individuals, however. Its characters represent typical reactions to the familiar process of bribery and corruption by which Costaguana came to be dominated by the Holroyd banking interests and the Gould silver mine. Charles Gould is made the apologist for the imperialists. "That's how your money making is justified here in the face of lawlessness and disorder," he says. "It is justified because the security it demands must be shared with an oppressed people. A better justice will come afterwards."¹⁰ It is clear that Conrad does not accept this view himself. Rather he puts his own opinion in the words of Dr. Monygham: "There is no peace and no rest in the de-

velopment of material interests. They have their law and their justice. But it is founded on expediency and is inhuman; it is without the rectitude, without the continuity and the force that can be found only in a moral principle. Mrs. Gould, the time approaches when all that the Gould concession stands for shall weigh as heavily upon the people as all the barbarism, cruelty and misrule of a few years back."¹¹

But if Conrad was aware of the implications of the imperialist process, he saw no alternative to it. For this reason, while *Nostromo* is his most impressive imaginative feat, it is disappointing in its totality. The writer accomplishes so much that one is surprised that his magic fails to accomplish a final working-out and clarification. All the elements necessary to the completeness of the story are there, but they are never brought into a relationship which corresponds to the reality from which they have been abstracted. Yet the book is not one of those failures that can be ignored. Intellectually it remains a sort of scarred monument to the confusion of its age, and imaginatively it contrives to interest us in the ideas and fortunes of a variety of characters: Gian' Battista, the Garibaldino and his family, Martin Decoud, the Avellanos, and the Goulds.

Conrad remarks in the Foreword to his next major work, *Chance*, that "no particular moral complexion has been put on this novel." It is probably his finest effort as a pure raconteur and may be bracketed with such short stories as "Gaspar Ruiz" and "Il Conde" as works that imply no more than they say. One cannot believe that its wide popularity was as fortuitous as its conception and birth. For once the author was dealing with a familiar fabric of English life and

¹⁰ *Nostromo*, p. 84.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 510.

letters: London and its suburbs, an impossibly noble sea captain who might have stepped out of the pages of Dickens, a distressed heroine, some vulgarian cousins, a pair of kindly faddists, and a father who serves as a sinister obstacle to the lovers' happiness. It is all quite in the Burney-Dickens tradition. While *Chance* has its dark shadings, its total impression is no more tragic than that of *David Copperfield*; in fact, Conrad gives it more than the conventionally happy ending, for he not only heals Flora de Barral's emotional wound but rewards her with both of the men she loves.

These facets of the work may help to explain its wide, but not its enduring, popularity. For that we must look elsewhere. In general, we may take *Chance* as a feat of literary virtuosity in which the author let go with all his talents as a narrator and conversationalist to transmute metal that is essentially baser than that of his moments of great insight. The story is unfolded like a psychological detective story in which the problem is to catch a motive rather than a murderer, though the murderer, too, in the person of Mr. de Barral, is there at the end. Marlow, of course, is the sleuth, with the author in the first-person singular as Watson. Conrad gives Marlow a prima donna role in this book. One can only regret the later obscurity of a character who throws out such casual remarks as these:

It was one of those dewy, starry nights, oppressing our spirit, crushing our pride, by the brilliant evidence of the awful loneliness, of the hopeless obscure insignificance of our globe lost in the splendid revelation of a glittering, soulless universe. I hate such nights [p. 51].

He possessed all the civic virtues in their very meanest form, and the finishing touch was given by a low sort of consciousness he manifested of possessing them [p. 137].

Throughout the work there is a new vividness of characterization as though, abandoning the chiaroscuro of his earlier portrait manner, Conrad chose to paint with an eighteenth-century palette. The Fynes are done in a brilliant rubato of ironic humor, and nothing could excel the concentrated venom in the portrayal of Flora's detestable governess and the dubious Charlie. As for Mr. de Barral, he is worthy of Balzac. Conrad had discovered the art of caricature, and, while he is not a caricaturist, he paints these people in bold strokes which did not belong to his earlier manner, where it was the impression rather than the simple outline that counted. The exception to this is, of course, Flora de Barral, who, unlike the others, is a changing character and hence must be treated in nuance. Her evolution from the child exposed to misfortune by her father's imprisonment and scarred by the psychological vitriol of her detestable governess, to the despondent and embittered girl who visits the Fynes, and finally to the mature and healed woman, forms the narrative thread.

Victory, the other important novel of Conrad's middle period, shows many characteristics in common with *Chance*. There is the same boldness of characterization, the same firm grasp of incident and event. It is as though the best works of Conrad's literary youth had been conceived as poetic visions, while in his middle writing years the conception was essentially that of prose. But *Victory*, unlike *Chance*, is by no means a light or pleasant novel. Conrad wrote of it: "It is a book in which I have tried to grasp at more 'life-stuff' than perhaps in any other of my works."¹² The philosophy lies closer to the narrative surface in this tale than in Conrad's other books; indeed,

¹² *Life and Letters*, II, 342.

though the characters are individual enough, their relationship to one another is as rigid and exact as that of figures in a morality play.

Victory might have enjoyed a considerable vogue in the last ten years, for its thesis has been even more pertinent in these times than when it was written. It represents the conflicts between two philosophies—the passive pessimism of Axel Heyst, its protagonist, and the active cynicism of a polished villain who goes under the *nom de guerre* of “plain Mr. Jones.” Heyst, the son of a philosopher evidently suggested by Schopenhauer, embodies the resigned acceptance of that profound pessimism which seems to have been latent in the minds of thinking men for the past century. No human potentiality is worth the aspiration to Heyst, and he has retired to the solitude of a remote island in the Malay archipelago. With him is a Cockney girl named Lena, for whom he feels the half-hearted, reluctant love of a man whose temperament and opinions deeply cut him off from other people. Heyst’s reclusive existence is interrupted by the arrival of Mr. Jones and his followers, “my secretary, Martin Ricardo,” and Pedro, a South American of great strength and brute intelligence. There is no mistaking the meaning attached to these desperadoes. Heyst remarks: “Here they are, the envoys of the outer world. Here they are before you—evil intelligence, instinctive savagery, arm in arm. The brute force is at the back.” The three men, in fact, form a perfect microcosm of what later emerged as fascism. The leader of the trio has evolved a philosophy of cruelty and plunder based on the assumption that most people are tame, while he and his followers will stick at nothing. He dominates his creatures with an odd fascination which is a

startling anticipation of the whole *Führer* relationship. There is even a dash of homosexuality in the evil spell that Ricardo and Pedro feel without understanding it.

Mr. Jones and his followers face the problem of getting Heyst to reveal the hiding-place of an illusory treasure. Nearly half of the book is taken up with a tense plot in which Heyst is alternately bullied and cajoled in the now familiar Fascist manner, until he is finally shocked out of his passivity by his fears for the girl. When he finds the will to resist, he lacks the means to do so. His only weapon, a revolver, has been stolen by a servant. Meanwhile, Lena, from whom he expects only weakness, is an unsuspected support to him. Far from being the passive victim of the bandits, she uses her wiles to get a weapon from Ricardo. The novel ends in what critics have aptly described as an Elizabethan welter of blood, for the bullet Mr. Jones intends for his renegade follower, Ricardo, hits Lena, and Heyst kills himself, having learned of her fidelity to him and her ultimate “victory” too late. For Heyst, the lesson was not only to accept the reality of love but also to trust in the common people, for the reader is never allowed to forget Lena’s drab origins. Mr. Jones, again an anticipation of the Fascist leader, despises the “vile populace,” though he says to Heyst, “and yet one must make use of the brutes.” Heyst, gentleman and detached intellectual, never makes use, never expects help from this quarter. Yet it is the only place from which help can come. That is the meaning of *Victory* in terms of our immediate decade. This book is perhaps the easiest reading of Conrad’s major novels, which is not in the least to its discredit. It is almost a perfect summary of that sickness of the human soul which

has characterized the nineteenth century and the first half of our own. Perhaps the future will see a time when it will be out of date; if so, the novel will have helped to make that future, for it contains an antidote to the poison it describes.

The Arrow of Gold is its author's unique effort in the love story—that is, the story of a love that assumes a temporary importance over all other affairs of life. It is pretty generally known to be closely autobiographical, and this may partly account for its lack of popularity even among Conrad's warmest admirers. Conrad's ideals of love were ultrarefined, almost as though he had somehow got a personal heritage from the seventeenth-century salons. Thus, for many people, the book reads like ingenious but sterile *préciosité*, with everyone impossibly polished and polite. But if *The Arrow of Gold* has something of the spirit of the old romance in it, this flowering is shown to us with the earth still clinging to its roots, and the lover is realist enough gratefully to accept it as an essential condition of life. The author is aware that he is dealing with tenuous material, for he says a few words in its defense: "You may think that I am subtilizing my impressions on purpose, but you may take it from a man who has lived a rough, a very rough life, that it is the subtleties of personalities, and contacts, and events, that count for interest and memory."¹³

Many of Conrad's readers have met the chief characters of *The Arrow of Gold* and have learned something of its plot from *The Mirror of the Sea*, where the gun-running episodes that disappointed me in the former were satisfactorily taken care of. But the background of adventure forms no part of the author's present intention, which is the study of a

femme fatale. The reader's taste in matters not strictly literary must determine whether he finds the siren seductive, but it is absurd to say that Conrad has veiled her either in reticences or inadequate understanding. Here are the facts, all quite credible and clearly outlined. Rita de Lastaola, a Basque girl of well-to-do peasant stock, as the mistress of a famous painter has been formed into something of a work of art herself. At his death she inherits his wealth and his entrée into the great world of art and of politics. Though young in years, her character has been matured by a precocity of experience. At the point that "Monsieur George," a thin disguise for the author, meets the lady and becomes her admirer, she is involved in a conspiracy in behalf of Don Carlos, pretender to the Spanish throne.

More than one of her suitors is aware of some ghost in her past. It finally develops that Rita, like Flora de Barral, is in fact suffering from a childhood trauma, in her case an early love experience which she regards as completely sully and unworthy. This is her nexus with the common run of humanity; the feeling of guilt for an act inconsistent with the self she later becomes. Her past is kept alive by the fear of the cousin, who was the premature lover. It is only when Ortega, the half-mad cousin, falls in the company of Monsieur George by accident and accuses Rita of her early wantonness before the man she now loves that the bar is lifted. Rita, the essence of refined sensibilities, is shown to have her feet of clay, but Monsieur George is mature enough to accept the clay as the inevitable accompaniment to a rare human spirit. But the ways of the enchantress are forever a little mysterious. Rita is too much the creature of her own obscure destiny to remain Monsieur George's lover long. "A thing like that cannot go

¹³ *The Arrow of Gold*, p. 13.

on forever," Conrad remarked in a letter about the story.

There is not much to *The Arrow of Gold* except Rita and what she stands for. Dominic Cervoni reappears in this book, but he is rather less vivid than in *The Mirror of the Sea*. Captain J. K. Blunt and his mother are beautifully done, and Therese, Rita's sister, must receive honorable mention; but *The Arrow of Gold* cannot be read so much as an interpretation of the outer world as of its author's inner one. Apart from its autobiographic interest, it will speak most directly to those people whose private life of sentiment is like his own.

Conrad's work generally lacks the immediacy of appeal that we find in works of less complex genius. He colors life with his own temperament so much that we must get accustomed to a private world which at its best is poetic enough to invest the commonplace incident with a meaning most of us overlook. Our author has his foibles like others of the elect. He pursues a misunderstanding as Shakespeare pursues a pun, and he seems to take a sardonic delight in showing characters talking at complete cross-purposes. Then there is the gruesome, shivery little vignette occurring with such regularity that it almost seems his hallmark: Falk and the carpenter stalking each other on the drifting steamer; the murder of Verloc in *The Secret Agent*; Antonio's beard flaring up as his body falls into the fire in *Victory*; the death of Hirsch in *Nostromo*; the mutilation of Razumov in *Under Western Eyes*. These get under the reader's skin unpleasantly at times and are likely to pop out in bad dreams.

In summing up the basic aspects of Conrad's work, we must note that his

exceptionally cosmopolitan background caused him to paint on a broader canvas than his fellow English novelists. His characters include a profusion of races and nationalities all treated in their common dignity as human beings, and his situations are concerned with the universals of human experience. In this respect there was more than a dash of the Elizabethan in him. Certainly, he was the antithesis of the local colorists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for such writers' stock-in-trade is the exceptional rather than the generally characteristic behavior. Conrad's ability to recognize that a Negro or a Malay could be the protagonist of a drama that also belongs in the European's range of experience seems more important today, when the diverse members of the human family are developing a new awareness of one another, than it did twenty years ago. A man with such ambitious literary aims must succeed or fail greatly. It is therefore not surprising that the most persistent criticism of Conrad may be summed up in the word "charlatan," which Somerset Maugham puts with evident approval in the mouth of one of his own characters. Oddly enough, Conrad applied the term "inspired humbug" to himself years before that in a letter to Edward Garnett.¹⁴ This is what a man who aims at the peaks must fear himself to be in moments of self-criticism. It has often been noted that the ridiculous and the sublime have a near kinship. In his less inspired moments Conrad completes the circle between the two. But, judged on the basis of his half-dozen best novels and a dozen or more shorter narratives, he has every claim to belong in the small company of really great writers of prose fiction.

¹⁴ *Life and Letters*, I, 193.

Uncle Sam's Folklore

JULIA COOLEY ALTROCCHI¹

AMERICA has been thinking about itself as an entity, a nation, a folk, for only a little over a hundred and fifty years. Uncle Samuel was too busy before that, pulling down trees, yanking out stumps, rolling away boulders, fighting Indians, building houses on windswept hillsides, and scattering seeds in stony fields to take time out to slap himself on the chest and say: "Look at me! What manner of man am I?" or "What a fine man am I!" after the manner of his English forebear, John Horner (that steward of Henry VIII who descended from history into the nursery rhyme). American self-appraisal has only very recently been rendered in the fields of literature, art, science, history. Last of all, we have become aware suddenly of the harvestable field of our own folklore. The awareness and the study are so fresh that we have only just started to reap the spicy crop of the lore itself—Elizabethan survivals in the Tennessee mountains, "stars" falling "on Alabama," cowboy ballads in the Southwest, pine-tall tales of the lumber-camps, salt-sharp chanteys along the Maine Coast, Old Stormalong yarns of the sea. And we have scarcely begun to analyze, weigh, and compare our own native lore with that of other peoples.

We are therefore led to make our own comparisons, our own small heftings and viewings and appraisals, while waiting for the learned book which is probably now in the process of being written on the subject of the ancestry and individuation of American folklore.

Nothing, of course, springs full-grown from the brow of Zeus and the visage of history (except Pallas Athene). Few may go back over the purple-misty ways of human rituals and taboos, dreams and fantasies, bogeys and fears and laughter, wild practices and gay practicalities, to find the beginnings of the lore of the human folk in general. (It is more than interesting that the very word "lore" goes far back behind its Anglo-Saxon roots, which mean "to teach," "to learn," "to lead the way," straight to an earthy kinship with the Latin "furrow." To field and furrow and forest-clearing, then, for our lore's beginnings!)

Perhaps the most remarkable paragraphs on the vast, misty millenniums which went into the making of our human minds in general (and therefore our inherited lore) appear in Thomas Mann's *Joseph and His Brothers*, where he dwells eloquently upon the pitifully brief seven thousand years of our recorded history, the probable submergence of a far-from-mythical Atlantis some ninety-five hundred years before Christ, and the vast "time-coulisses" which stretched backward from that "dread event, knowledge of which penetrated into all the lands of the earth," to other deluges and that still greater Deluge and submergence of the "island continent of Lemuria below the Indian Ocean some forty-three thousand years before the Christian Era.

In such water-glimmering dim distances as those began some of our fables, some of our lore, including the deluge myth itself that is still told by every one of our Indian tribes, down to the play of

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the smallest and newest American infant dragging his toy ark on the imaginary floods of the living-room floor and begging for a repetition of the ship-shaped story of Noah—and including much of all water-lore, serpents out of the sea, gods of the ocean, Old Men of the Sea, and all the strange, blue stories of the world!

In such dim distances, then, the sun was worshiped in Babylon, in Phoenicia, in Egypt, at Carnac in Brittany, at Stonehenge, and in countless other places. But we are a practical nation and have long ago discarded the last glittering vestiges of sun-worship! Yet have we? The ancient worshipers faced south, to the sun's altar, and turned their bodies in a slow, venerating, repetitious circle, sunwise, east to west, left to right. So the Romans turned before their altars, so the Druids turned. Today we call it "clockwise," for the hands on all our timepieces move with the ancient sun-worshipers, east to west. We "count out" left to right, we deal cards left to right; we are told to read left to right in all group photographs in newspapers and magazines. And the sun hangs, in wheels and rosettes and marigolds and medallions, all over the ceilings and walls and façades of our public buildings. And the sun lingers in hundreds of our tales.

It has been shown, through scholarly studies, that King Arthur, Gawain, Lancelot, Percival, and Galahad—so full of influence upon our Anglo-Saxon heritage as chivalrous exemplars in literature, legend, simile, phrase, and frontier behavior—were all sun-descended. Similarly, it has been proved that the Irish folk giants, Cuchullin and Fin M'Coul, were merely metamorphosed sun-gods.

W. B. Yeats asks in *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*:

What Irishman, woman or child, has not heard of our renowned Hibernian Hercules, the

great and glorious Fin M'Coul? . . . Fin pulled up a fir tree, and, after lopping off the roots and branches, made a walking-stick of it, and set out on his way to Oonagh. . . . There was at that time another giant named Cuchullin. . . . The report went that by one of his fists he flattened a thunderbolt and kept it in his pocket, in the shape of a pancake, to show to all his enemies. . . .

Does this remind us of one of our own folk giants? The connection, I believe, has not been sufficiently emphasized, for it would seem obvious that our Paul Bunyan is kin to these Brobdignags of Ireland. Is it not quite possible that some Irish yarners in our lumber-camps (and there had been gradual Irish immigration into this country long before the potato famine of 1845 and the Irish Rebellion of 1795) started Paul striding in his seven-league boots across our legendry—Paul who also used a pine tree for a staff; who dug the Great Lakes to supply Babe, his Blue Ox, with water; who, in the words of Pat Morrisette's fine, swinging poem, "Paul Bunyan: An American Symbol,"

drank the rainbows dry
And stripped the haunches of a thousand deer
To make a breakfast for his hunger!

Paul Bunyan, great-(many-times-great)-grandson of the sun!

Far and deep are the sources—Lemuria sinking under the Indian Ocean (were there sun-myths there?); India with its great hierarchy of spirits of the wind, the sky, the thunder, the lightning, and its great mythologies and legends and fairy tales, the mothering source of so much of our own literature and lore and very language; the Aryans moving slowly out of India to the high steppes and slopes of the Caucasus.

Sir James G. Frazer surmises in *The Golden Bough*:

If the Aryans, as some think, roamed the wide steppes of Russia or Central Asia with

their flocks or herds before they plunged into the gloom of the European forests, they may have worshipped the god of the blue or cloudy firmament and the flashing thunderbolt long before they thought of associating him with the blasted oaks in their new home.

Now our ancestors moved into the forests of Europe, the beautiful oak and pine forests of Arcadian Greece, the gloomy Ciminian forests of Italy, the immense Hercynian forests of Germany, the lesser forest of Arden. In the silver-dark woods of Greece and Italy the ancient cult of Diana was followed, and later in Ireland the moon was worshiped with strange rites. Today, on seeing the new moon, an Irishman may often make the sign of the cross and say: "May thou leave us as safe as thou hast found us!"

Let us look a little further at the provenience of some of our ancient lore, before we see how Uncle Samuel has recast some of it in his own peculiar image and before we look for possible indigenous lore.

All the folklore of our wedding ceremonies is as old as the ritual of marriage itself and may be properly included, if, as the expert, Hartland, maintains, folklore embraces "superstition now living and vigorous." What have we of the old? The wedding veil to protect the bride from evil spirits; the wedding bell to drive away the same demons; the wedding cake, far older than the shared meal-cake of the Romans, as old as the use of grains and the conception of the fertility gods connected with them; the ring to keep the primitive soul in the body; the primitive giving-away of the bride; the carrying over the threshold, older than the rape of the Sabines, as old as the tree-spirit indwelling in the wood of the house (James G. Frazer's magnificent *Golden Bough* makes these filiations very clear); and the rice scattered over the

bride that her seed may be numerous. With what careless laughter we perform in church and house these festal rites that have been performed in field and forest with solemn and fearful devotion by our pagan ancestors for unrecorded millenniums!

All our Christmas folk ritual—our tree, our Yule log, our candles, our singing, our gift-exchanges—go far behind the Roman Saturnalia again into the hazy dawn of our sun-worshipping, fire-worshipping, tree-worshipping ancestors. And our mistletoe is the Golden Bough itself, about which Frazer wrote his twelve tremendous volumes.

Our children dance and sing and play games that were solemn and ritualistic once and have become mere rigamaroles. "Eenie meenie minie mo" was a terrifying, dark, magic formula once. "Cock Robin is dead" has untold ancient terror in it, for the robin, because of its flaming breast, was a bird as sacred as fire, and to kill it was misfortune, death! "A little bird told me" is no gay whimsicality. It, too, has all the fearful mystery of the forest in it. The "little bird" was the wren, a bird of the gods with powers more terrible than those of the eagle or the devil.

A friend tosses off a "God bless you!" casually, if you sneeze. It was far from casual once. The dark savage went through wild acrobatic stunts and placatory ceremonies and prayers to recapture the soul that might have escaped the body during the fearful catastrophe of a sneeze! Wish on the wishbone! Yes, nothing but a joke now. But once the Etruscan soothsayers stood in the cleared space—the *templum* (ancestor of our builded temples)—to watch the flight of birds or opened the body of a bird and studied its inner pattern. The whole, long, strange cycle of divination by birds is in our wishing on the furculum of

a fowl! Do you believe in astrology? So common is the belief that almost every newspaper must carry an astrology column. Shades of the Chaldeans!

Have you seen farmers hunting for water with the witch-hazel rod? The witch-hazel rod is the direct descendant of the magic wand of the Druid. Have you seen cornerstone-laying ceremonies? The custom of depositing records is much kinder than that of slaying a human being and burying his bleeding body in the foundation of the bridge, the castle, or the temple to appease the angry spirit of the disarranged and desecrated earth; but the kinship of the customs is gruesomely apparent. Do you carry a rabbit's foot on your car? Do you still believe in animal totems and in the special sanctity of the talus or anklebone? No, but your ancestors did. Do you believe in fairies? No. But your hard-hitting, hard-fighting, straight-from-the-shoulder, realistic American heroes believe in "gremlins," and not entirely with laughter up the chevroned sleeve. And what, indeed, may fairies be? Very ancient little creatures, out of the fables of India, perhaps, or the transformed *manes* or *fatuae* of Rome; the *fées* of medieval France; the Tuath-de-Danan, the looming gods of early Ireland dwindled down into the "good people" or the tiny aboriginal, pre-Celtic inhabitants of England; or primitive souls, tiny human counterparts escaped. (Strange that human beings persist in projecting images larger or smaller than themselves—giants or fairies.)

Do you believe in effigies or in sticking pins into your enemies by perforating their puppets? No. But, in 1935, "Lupe Velez, feuding with Jetta Goudal, had a dressing-table doll made in the image of her enemy and gleefully used it for a pin-cushion." And the same custom is abun-

dantly followed in the dark, voodooistic regions of our South. And on a beach in Michigan a few months ago, I watched Hirohito's effigy burn over a modern yet ancient-crackling bonfire! How many thousands of such images must have burned throughout our pridefully "modern," "streamlined" country on V-J day!

Do you throw pennies into the uncountable replicas of the wishing-well? All the deep, dark, strange customs of sacrificing to the spirits of water are there—all the racial memories of foam-fanged serpents, slimed dragons, water-horses, mermaids and mermen, Poseidons and Tritons, agonies of Laocoön and of tormented Andromeda, enchantments of Vivian and other sirens of the lake. Pause at the brink of the foolish wishing-well, for it is strange lore and very dark and ancient that brings you there.

So it is with almost all our folklore. As surely as we are descended from primates, ground apes, Drift man, Java man, and Cromagnon, so are the dreams we dream, the tales we tell, the rituals we perform, in phrase if not in deed, the customs which we consider so characteristic of our America or our region of America, similarly sired. Yet, as customs branch away, they change. What has America done with its inherited folklore or what new quirks of folk has it given to the world?

As Uncle Samuel himself differs from John Bull or from the typical Yorkshiremen who are his cousins, so his speech, his stories, and his folklore differ. It is well again to remember that there is a little of Patrick in Uncle Samuel, too; for this has not been sufficiently emphasized. Pat's gusty humor and flexibility and yarning are everywhere apparent. Even Dutch Rip Van Winkle's land-of-sleeping resembles the beautiful Tirna

nOg, the Country of the Young, from which the bard Oisín returned after three hundred years with his beard suddenly sweeping the ground.

But let us see if we can find what some of the differentials of Samuel's own personality were. First of all, he was an adventurous spirit, or he never would have left the snug safety of the British Isles. He was the forth-faring, "beholden-to-nobody" (how often I have heard that phrase among my own people in New England!), hew-me-a-home-in-the-wilderness, on-my-own, accountable-only-to-God type. To hew that home he had to work like the devil, but there had to be a spark of merriment somewhere below his work-toughened, blast-roughened exterior, or the very nature of the adventure would have laid him in the grave long before his siring-time. There was a rare resiliency there under the stern exterior. There was a wonderful inheritance of good sportsmanship, laughing off the hardships, turning a buffet of fate into a chuckle—Celtic humor combined with British adaptability—philosophical resiliency, wisecracking.

While our earliest American pioneers were subduing the bitter fields of New England, they were afraid of no man, not even Indians (they dealt with Indians, flintlock for tomahawk, massacre for massacre every time); they were afraid of no blast and no blight, no plague, no visitation whatsoever of their environment. They feared only God, and they did not tremble visibly before God. They bent on sturdy knees, without cringing. They walked with uprightness, rectitude, righteousness, in every physical and moral sense of those sturdy, rectilinear old Roman words.

There had been few deaths on this continent—only a few graves of Indians. The constant reminders of death in Eu-

rope, with its omnipresent gray ruins of antiquity, its cemeteries deep with burials and reburials, its dust which is the "dust of heroes," have an inescapably funereal and solemnifying influence. In America there was only youth, the dawn, and life—dynamic and abundant life. As a result, our folklore is lacking in some of the dread figures of Old World lore. There are no fearsome specters, except a dwindled spook or two in Washington Irving's half-Dutch legends and later, when houses had been lived in long enough, a few "hants." (Of course, the Negro brought magic, voodoo, conjure, and demonic tales into the South. But there are no real folklorish bugaboos, descendants of the dread Welsh god, Black Bucca.) There are no dragons or serpents, those ancient water-creatures and dimly remembered mastodons and dinosaurs of the European continent. There are few creatures of the night, no star-myths or fully developed moon-myths in our lore. Our pioneers went to bed early and were unafraid of the night.

We were a long time "subduing." Our Yankees exchanged implements, developed their wits, and swapped a few mild stories and jokes. There is a fine verbal portrait of this early Yankee in Constance Rourke's *Roots of American Culture*. Then our Yankee pioneer, cocky and sure, with the wilderness tamed and God in his pocket, began self-confidently to move—west. (Always that west of the world with its immemorial lure—the land below the setting sun, where the "seeds of the sun," gold or golden opportunity, must lie: Meropis, Elysium on the far edge of the earth, the Garden of the Hesperides, the Blessed and the Fortunate Isles, Tirna nOg off the western cliffs of Ireland, Avalon, Atlantis, the Fountain of Youth, the seven gold-and-turquoise-gleaming cities of Ci-

bola, the Mother Lode, continent's end, rainbow's end, the country west of the moon!) Then, to the westward-going American the prairies unfolded like a gigantic sunflower, and the vast rivers came into view and the canyons deep as earth and the unbelievable trees with the stars tangled in their branches! The landscape fathered exuberance, exaggeration, and the towering tale because it was itself an exaggeration.

Says Charles Russell in *Trails Plowed Under*: "A man in the States might have been a liar in a small way but when he comes west he soon takes lessons from the prairies."

The American Joe Miller records that "a Kentuckian was once asked what he considered the boundaries of the United States. 'The boundaries of our country, sir?' he replied. 'Why, sir, on the north we are bounded by the Aurora Borealis, on the east we are bounded by the rising sun, on the south we are bounded by the procession [*sic*] of the Equinoxes and on the west by the Day of Judgment.'"

The forth-faring, tongue-in-cheek, unstoppable Yankee expanded not only geographically but creatively, conversationally, and spiritually. He began to try to match even the gigantic scenery which opened up before him. He accepted all challenges, even those of the landscape. The understatement of his insular British ancestors was abandoned forever. Someone has pointed out that an island people of necessity develops reticence, good breeding, a quiet sort of diplomacy, as people in a small, crowded room must learn a non-elbowing technique and at least an imitation of good manners in order to get along at all. The understatement is surely also a part of this island heritage. But now there was no island any more! There was room for wide-swinging axes, heroic journeys, and sky-

curving boasts! The Yankee had broken away from the mother-nation not only geographically but, at last, politically. He had beaten her in a showdown. How those loosened Yankee tongues wagged now! (What wags!) The American became, plurally like that Jonathan Brooke of New London who delivered a Groton-massacre memorial address, standing on a hill and crying out to the small audience and the four winds: "Attention, Universe!"

Paul Bunyan was the son of Strength and Laughter. Even the mythical monsters of his camp were the brood of buffoonery—the Gillygaloo Bird that laid square eggs, the Goofus Bird that flew backward ("It doesn't give a darn where it's going, it only wants to know where it's been"), the Hoop Snake, the Whirligig Fish, the Hodag that slept leaning against the trunks of trees, gay American creatures of fantasy, *caricatures* of all the Old World monsters of sheer horror, the cockatrices and chimeras, firedrakes and chichivaches.

And all the healthy crew of kindred giants multiplied. Pecos Bill strode through the West like ten Titans, riding the Oklahoma cyclone that washed out the Grand Canyon and gouged out Death Valley. Bill's mother, says Frank Shay in *Here's Audacity*, went after the Indians who attacked camp one night with a broom! "She killed forty-five before they understood she did not consider them socially desirable." She weaned Bill, says Edward O'Reilly, "on moonshine liquor when he was three days old. He cut his teeth on a bowie knife. . . . Pecos Bill invented the six-shooter and train-robbin' and most of the crimes popular in the old days of the West. He didn't invent cow-stealin'. That was discovered by King David in the Bible but Bill improved on it."

Mike Fink was "a little bit the almightyest man on the river anyhow!" A part of our young, self-confident national psychology perhaps—we who still feel ourselves a little bit the "almightiest" nation on the planet?

And Old Stormalong was our Man of the Sea—but not the dread "Old Man of the Sea" of ancient fable—again a happy caricature. "Stormalong took his whale soup in a Cape Cod dory, his favorite meat was shark, he liked ostrich eggs for breakfast and then he would lie back on the deck and pick his teeth with an eighteen foot oar." Stormalong's ship, "The Courser," Frank Shay declares, "penetrated the clouds and the top sections were on hinges so they could be bent over to let the sun and moon pass. Her sails were so big that the builders had to take all the able-bodied sail-makers out in the Sahara Desert to find room to sew them. The skipper had to order all hands aloft six days before a storm. The young men who were sent aloft usually came down as grey-beards."

John Henry was the overgrown steel-driver, a Negro who grew into a legend of power and success for his frustrated, dream-projecting race.

David Crockett helped to make himself into a legend:

I'm that same David Crockett, fresh from the backwoods, half-horse, half-alligator, a little touched with the snapping-turtle; can wade the Mississippi, leap the Ohio, ride upon a streak of lightning and slip without a scratch down a honey-locust; can whip my weight in wild cats, —and if any gentleman pleases, for a ten dollar bill, he may throw in a panther,—hug a bear too close for comfort, and eat any man opposed to Jackson. . . .

Everyone seemed to be boasting outlandishly:

"My name is Nimrod Wildfire . . . that's got the prettiest sister, fastest horse and ugliest dog in the District and

can outrun, outjump, throw down, drag out and whip any man in all Kaintuck."

"I'm a Tennessee screamer."

"I'm a two-gun man," sang out the cowboy, "and a very bad man and won't do to monkey with."

"Whoo-oop!" roared the riverman! "I'm the old original iron-jawed, brass-mounted, copper-bellied corpse-maker from the wilds of Arkansas! Look at me! I'm the man they call Sudden Death and General Desolation! . . . Blood's my natural drink! . . . Cast your eye on me, gentlemen! And lay low and hold your breath, for I'm 'bout to turn myself loose!"

This is all a happy, harmless, healthy kind of boasting. It is not at the hurt expense of anyone else. It is youth triumphant, vitality on the rampage. There is little in it of the swollen malice which has puffed out all our vocables for boasting, in their very origins: "brag" from the Middle English "to trumpet"; "bombast" from the Persian for "stuffing, padding"; "bumptious" from the Greek "to overflow"; "buffoon" from Vulgar Latin "to puff out the cheeks"; "fool," Latin *foliis*, "bellows, bag"! (Yet the quality may lead to a certain danger in our national character, unless we yield room on the field for the natural, healthy boastings of other races, other nations.)

"This boasting," says Margaret Mead in her fine book appraising the American character, *And Keep Your Powder Dry*, "goes with the whole American character . . . a character that is geared to success and to movement, invigorated by obstacles and difficulties."

It is interesting, from this point of view, to study the categories into which Mr. B. A. Botkin in his voluminous, valuable mulligan, *Treasury of American Folklore*, divides this field of Americana.

There are: (1) heroes and boasters, (2) boosters and knockers, (3) jesters, (4) liars, (5) folk tales and legends, and (6) songs and rhymes.

A happy crew, then, boasting, boosting, jesting, fancifying, yarning, singing at the tops of their lungs—the makers of American folklore. A young nation, magnificent, exuberant—a young nation that has just finished winning another war, a nation that can “lick its weight in wild cats,” a nation that can wisecrack even at the edge of foxholes. No dark tales and rituals here, bred in moon-misty forests, human sacrifice, spilled blood, dragon-devourings, and black magic. But plenty of changed folk customs and altered folklore deep out of Mother Asia and Mother Europe—

gay Maypole dances, the meaning of the tree-pole and the once ritualistic dance long ago forgotten; wholly “merry” Christmas rites; joyous wedding ceremonies; careless wishings at the well; cheerfully Americanized “spells” and “rhymes,” “ballads” and “dances”; lightened superstitions; and characteristically whimsical native tricks and stunts and buck-passings and wisecrackings and games and usages and vogues, and many laughterful tales, passed around the campfire and the hearthfire, of deeds in the open, of lusty heroes battling not so often other bashed heroes but licking their environment, instead, conquering the good, the very good, American earth, and plucking the eagles from the sky!

What Kind of Education Does This Country Want?

In spite of several depressing estimates I have read, of our public education and what it has done or not done for and to American Youth, I still guess that this country has had the education it wanted or was willing to pay for. That is all any democratic nation ever gets, though totalitarian countries get what their government hands out to them. If we are ever to have a better education, we shall get it, not by scolding the schools and teachers, but by evangelizing the adult electorate.

Our American attitude towards public education is a little puzzling, suggesting a sort of schizophrenia. As a nation we believe in education and when asked will always agree that it is the “bulwark of our democracy.” And yet we assume that children are usually miserable in school, that adults never got anything except boredom out of school, that the subjects taught there have no relation to “real life,” and that teachers are mostly tyrants or fools. This way of thinking could be rated as a folk myth and discounted as a national form of humor if it did not suggest popular doubt of the value of formal education. If this doubt really exists in the public, then for it to spend so much on what it does not believe in would seem an insane procedure.

—ROBERT M. GAY, “*Ut spem habeamus*,” in the October *English Leaflet*.

"The Tempest" and "Troilus and Crèssida"

STEPHEN MERTON¹

I

Two characters in *The Tempest*, Prospero and Caliban, have intrigued critics. Prospero looms like a great puppet-master among men whose fate he manipulates. The analogy between Prospero, guiding his plot, complicating and solving the human relationships in his private little play, and Shakespeare the playwright is tempting. Some critics have been led by it to discern in Prospero a veiled autobiographic portrait of Shakespeare. The chief evidence cited for such an interpretation has been Prospero's speech abjuring the magical arts with whose aid he has bedimmed the noontide sun, called forth the mutinous winds, given fire to the rattling thunder, and waked sleepers from their graves. Thus Brandes notes that here Prospero "utters words whose personal application has never been approached by any character set upon the stage by Shakespeare."²

But this rough magic
I here abjure, and, when I have requir'd
Some heavenly music, which even now I do,
. . . I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book [V, i, 50-57].³

Equally as interesting as the character of Prospero to critics has been that of Cali-

ban, incongruous mixture of good and evil, of poet and brute. "If the depth of impression made by an imaginary character may be gauged by the literature which that character calls forth," Furness noted back in 1892, "then must Hamlet and Falstaff admit Caliban to a place between them."⁴

Dominating as Prospero and Caliban seem to be each in his own right, they certainly appear unrelated to each other, except as they constitute, together with Ariel, the central figures who lend the play its distinctive imaginative quality. It is here suggested that a relation did, however, exist between Prospero and Caliban in Shakespeare's mind and that the problems of their character and function may become clearer in the light of Shakespeare's experience with somewhat similar problems in *Troilus and Cressida*.

Professor Oscar James Campbell has suggested that in *Troilus and Cressida* Shakespeare used the conventions of "comicall satyre" developed by Jonson and Marston.⁵ This new dramatic genre had as its purpose that of formal satire: to expose and deflate social upstarts and other fools. The agents of the satire were the "commentators," whose parts became the most important of the dramatic conventions. The commentators were of two types: a serious one, who voiced the author's opinions, and a buffoon. To-

¹ Department of English, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va.

² George Brandes, *William Shakespeare* (New York, 1898), p. 386.

³ The text throughout is that of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. W. A. Neilson (Boston and New York, 1906).

⁴ "Introduction" to *The Tempest* (New Variorum ed.; Philadelphia, 1895), p. viii.

⁵ *Comicall Satyre and Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida"* (San Marino, Calif., 1938). I have depended upon Professor Campbell's discussion of the role of the "commentators" in satiric drama.

gether they commented upon and devised plots to expose the fools. Thus in *Troilus and Cressida* the two chief commentators would be Ulysses, the official representative of the author, and Thersites, the buffoon. They accomplish the satiric ends of the play, the exposure and deflation of Ajax, Achilles, Troilus, and Cressida, and through them the criticism of social and ethical evils.

The spirit and purpose of *Troilus and Cressida* are satiric. The spirit and purpose of *The Tempest* are very different. In this respect the two plays are as far apart as any two plays of Shakespeare. *The Tempest* is joyous, serene, and graceful. Here, we feel, is the gentle Shakespeare at his mellowest. Certainly there is none of the cynicism, restlessness, and vulgarity which mark the "bitter" comedy. Nevertheless, as this article will try to show, in the construction of *The Tempest* Shakespeare has adopted the conventions of the commentators which he had earlier adopted in *Troilus and Cressida*. Here a distinction must be made between form and content, between the structure associated with satiric drama and the spirit of satire itself. I shall try to show that this structure could be used for a nonsatiric purpose, a romantic one, for example; specifically, that the same structural conventions were used in the development of the characters and functions of Ulysses and Prospero and of Thersites and Caliban.

II

The official commentator, according to the conventions, stands somewhat apart from the action as representative of the author, observes it, and comments upon it; he is the mouthpiece of the author in passages of deep import; and he manipulates the plot. All these features Prospero shares with Ulysses. Both are somewhat

detached from the centers of action and passion; both exhibit the dominance of the critical faculties and of reason over passion. They are intellectuals—critics whose function it is to analyze and expose the moral weaknesses of their fellows. All through *Troilus and Cressida*, this is the relation of Ulysses toward Ajax and Achilles. All through *The Tempest* Prospero's attitude is marked by philosophic detachment from the action and moral superiority to the other characters. Expressions such as the following indicate the pervasiveness of this attitude: "So glad of this as they I cannot be," "'Tis new to thee," "this insubstantial pageant," "Poor worm, thou art infected," "To enact my present fancies." "Now does my project gather to a head." He looks down from the Olympian heights of authorship on the human actions and relations which he has created. His moral superiority is apparent in his austere admonitions toward Ferdinand and Miranda to "not give dalliance too much rein," in his morally indignant attitude toward Caliban, and in the moral tone of his portrait of his brother Antonio. Toward the end of the play this moral superiority shines forth more graciously in his magnanimous forgiveness of all his enemies. As a corollary to this superior detachment of the commentator in Prospero, we may also note a relative absence of dramatic interest in his character. He lacks the vitality, for example, of Shakespeare's slaves of passion, who become tragically embroiled in their human relationships because of their flaws.

The commentator is a mouthpiece of the author as well as an observer and critic. As such he clarifies the meaning of the play. Ulysses thus develops the leading theme of *Troilus and Cressida* in his speech on the universal principle of order, which he illustrates from the three realms

of being—the heavens themselves, which "observe degree, priority, and place"; the state, where "primogenitive and due of birth, Prerogative of age, crowns, scepters, laurels . . . stand in authentic place" but by degree; and the individual, whose reason should rule, lest appetite "must last eat up himself."

Take but degree away, untune that string,
And, hark, what discord follows! [I, iii, 109-10.]

The discord among the Greeks follows because this principle of hierarchy—"the specialty of rule"—has been negated by the insubordination of Achilles. The political evil of the chaotic state whose order is upset because the king no longer rules over his subjects and the ethical evil of the chaotic individual whose order is upset because reason no longer rules over his passions are both criticized in the play through the commentator Ulysses. As an individual Ulysses best exemplifies this theme in the dominance of his own reason as a critic and as a contrast to the vain Achilles, the stupid Ajax, the impetuous Troilus,⁶ and the wanton Cressida.

The theme of *The Tempest* is likewise best expressed by and illustrated in Prospero. It is the theme of Shakespeare's last plays—forgiveness, regeneration, the turning of the evil of the old order into the good of the new, the sins and errors of the parents remitted in the love and hope of their children. Prospero thus expresses it:

The rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance. They, being penitent,
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
Not a frown further [IV, i, 27-30].

⁶ Who identifies reason with rationalization:
"Reason and respect
Makes livers pale and lustihood deject"
(II, ii, 49-50).

This theme of forgiveness is directly related to the pervasive Elizabethan theme of order, of reason versus passion in the individual. Though struck to the quick with the high wrongs of his enemies, Prospero's reason is king:

Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
Do I take part [V, i, 25-27].

His forgiveness of his brother and even of Caliban is a clear example of that Elizabethan ideal of virtue and reason which derives ultimately from Aristotle. The rarer action is in virtue rather than in vengeance. Even more clearly than did Ulysses, Prospero exemplifies this theme of the dominance of reason. Like Ulysses, he contrasts with the other important characters of his play, all of whom are under the sway of one passion or another: Antonio, Sebastian, Ferdinand, Miranda, not to mention the mentally as well as physically deformed Caliban and the drunken Trinculo and Stephano. The fact that Prospero is a student "well dedicated to closeness and the bettering of my mind" would indicate the importance of reason to him. Evidence of his habitual temperance is Miranda's remark upon his being aroused by Caliban's plot against his life:

Never till this day
Saw I him with anger so distempered
[IV, i, 144-145].

Also in this very scene he reveals his perspective and fundamental serenity in the great philosophical lyric on time and mortality, which concludes on a note of self-control:

A turn or two I'll walk
To still my beating mind [IV, ii, 146 ff.].

His Aristotelian virtue thus determines the happy ending of the comedy, right reason conquering the passion for vengeance.

As mouthpieces of the author, Ulysses and Prospero not only clarify and exemplify the themes of their plays but also deliver speeches of deep philosophical meaning. In *Troilus and Cressida*, aside from the speech on degree, the most serious passages are Ulysses' speeches on the destructive quality of time. This subject of time's fell hand, we know from his sonnets, was very close to Shakespeare himself. Upon this subject also Prospero delivers his most moving philosophical lyric.

The occasion of Ulysses' speeches is the purging of Achilles' pride by having the Greek generals each pass by and snub the warrior. Thereupon Ulysses delivers his "derision medicinal" on the mortality of earthly reputations. We cut a figure in the world, he says, only so long as our names are on men's tongues:

Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,
A great-sized monster of ingratitudes . . .
For Time is like a fashionable host
That slightly shakes his parting guest by the
hand,
And with his arms outstretch'd, as he would fly,
Grasps in the comer . . .
For beauty, wit
High birth, vigor of bone, desert in service,
Love, friendship, charity, are subjects all
To envious and calumniating Time
[III, iii, 145 ff.].

That is the one touch of nature that makes the whole world kin, the instinct of men "to praise new-born gawds," and in their public cruelty to allow a man fallen from high estate to hang "like a rusty nail, in monumental mockery."

These sentiments of Ulysses Shakespeare expresses with equal vigor in many sonnets. "Everything that grows holds in perfection but a little moment." "This bloody tyrant, Time," destroyer of youth and beauty, which yet escape destruction by being preserved in the poet's

verses, is one of the most persistent themes running through the sonnets, those intense personal expressions of Shakespeare.

The sentiments on time and mortality which bind also Prospero to Shakespeare occur in the lines that adorn Shakespeare's monument in Westminster Abbey:

These our actors
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air,
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep [IV, i, 148-58].⁷

Prospero dwells on the mutability of earthly goods; Ulysses dwells on the mutability of earthly fame; Shakespeare in the sonnets dwells on the mutability of earthly youth and beauty. Ulysses and Shakespeare and Prospero are bound by a theme whose closeness to Shakespeare is attested by its brilliant lyrical utterance whether in play or poem, by its winding itself so deeply into the recesses of his imagination that everywhere it issues in an exuberant stream of imagery. Many of Shakespeare's generation were, of course, possessed by this thought of mutability; none gave it a more vivid personal expression than did Shakespeare either in his own person or through the mouths of his commentators.

Another function of the commentator beside that of observer and mouthpiece is that of plot manipulator. It is illustrated in Ulysses' scheme to deflate the vain Achilles. This function is so striking in

⁷ Cf. Sonnet, LXIV, ll. 1-4:

"When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced
The rich proud cost of outward buried age;
When sometime lofty towers I see down-raised
And brass eternal slave to mortal rage. . . ."

the case of Prospero that upon it some critics have based their symbolic interpretation of Prospero as Shakespeare, and Prospero's renunciation of the magical art by which he manipulated the plot as Shakespeare's renunciation of the art of playwriting. The first words of Miranda refer to her father's art and suggest at the outset that the plot will be under his control:

If by your art my dearest father, you have
Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them
[I, ii, 1-2].

In his expository speeches to Miranda and Ariel and in his asides during the meeting of Ferdinand and Miranda, whose very love flowers as an artifice of Prospero, his role as manipulator of the plot is constantly projected into the foreground. He is always literally in command of the situation; it is directly or indirectly of his making from scene to scene of the play. Whenever there is to be a new complication or a sudden switch of scene, Prospero's control is emphasized with extraordinary clearness, usually in his dialogues with Ariel. This emphasis would indicate a purpose in Shakespeare to keep Prospero in the limelight as the contriver of the play. When in the final act his project gathers to a head, he brings all groups on the scene and knits up all the ends of the plot. Thus, in his combined roles of detached observer, author's mouthpiece, and plot contriver, Prospero displays the features of official commentator which relate him to the author.

III

*Accompanying the serious commentator in the satirical dramas is the buffoon. Carlo Buffone was associated with Macilente in Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour*; so Thersites is somewhat similarly associated with Ulysses;

and so, again adapted for a new purpose, Caliban is associated with Prospero.

The buffoon's part is characterized by unrestrained scurrility, delivered only as an end in itself, evoking the derision and aversion of the other characters and of the audience. Sometimes he descends to crude farce. Thersites and Caliban are both characterized in this way. Nestor calls Thersites "a slave whose gall coins slanders like a mint." Patroclus, on seeing him, says, "Good Thersites, come in and rail." Likewise Caliban's abuse of language is habitual:

You taught me language, and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse [I, ii, 363-64].

When dilating upon his favorite subject of Prospero, he remarks:

His spirits hear me
And yet I needs must curse [II, ii, 3-4].

The various ways in which Caliban resembles Thersites are well illustrated in the opening situations Shakespeare has arranged for each of them. Thersites enters calling up a picture of Agamemnon covered with running boils—"Full, all over, generally," to which he adds a pun on a running general. He is beaten and insulted by Ajax—"bitch-wolf's son," "toadstool"—whom he in turn reviles: "the plague of Greece upon thee," "I would thou didst itch from head to foot and I had the scratching of thee. I would make thee the loathsome scab in Greece." Caliban's entrance is similar. Prospero summons him with an epithet: "Thou poisonous slave . . . come forth." He enters with a curse on his lips:

As wicked dew as e'er my mother brush'd
With raven's feather from unwholesome fen
Drop on you both! A south-west blow on ye
And blister you all o'er [I, ii, 312-24].

Prospero threatens him with physical torments—cramps, side-stitches, pinches

—and further insults him: "lying slave," "filth as thou art."

The parallels are striking. Thersites and Caliban are virtuosos in the art of cursing, which suggests that they cultivate it for its own sake. Their imagery is vigorous and profuse; its associations are with loathsome diseases, especially skin diseases. Miss Caroline Spurgeon has noted the prevalence of such disease images in *Troilus and Cressida*. But this is a characteristic which Caliban shares with Thersites; it is one of the means used to arouse the audience's aversion to each one.⁸ It is related to the crude sex references both make. Further, both are insulted and physically maltreated by their masters, Thersites being beaten on the stage, Caliban being threatened with dire physical torments. This contemptuous treatment at the hands of other characters in the play is another means of arousing the audience's scorn for them.

To insure the derision and aversion of their Elizabethan audience, both Thersites and Caliban are physically deformed and both are bastards. In the "Dramatis Personae," Thersites is described as "a deformed and scurrilous Greek," and Caliban as "a savage and deformed Slave." Much is made of Caliban's deformity; he is described variously as a savage, a monster, a demidevil, a fish, a mooncalf. Just by their very appearance on the stage they would have aroused ridicule.

The differences between Thersites

⁸ Cf. *Troilus and Cressida*, V, i, 34-38, 20-28: "Now the rotten diseases of the south, guts griping, ruptures, catarrhs, loads of gravel i' the back, lethargies, cold palsies, . . ." etc., *The Tempest*, I, ii, 364; cf. II, ii, 1-3:

"All the infections that the sun sucks up
From bogs, fens, flats, on Prosper fall and make
him
By inch-meal a disease!"

and Caliban are very revealing of Shakespeare's adaptation of an old type to a new use. Thersites is a railing critic; he is "a core of envy." Caliban is neither markedly censorious nor envious; in a play that lacks satire he lacks a satiric function. Thersites is beaten on the stage. Caliban's physical maltreatment is only narrated, in keeping with the more restrained temper of his play. All of Thersites' speeches are in prose, all of Caliban's in verse. This all points to a difference in Shakespeare's conception of the two, related to the difference in spirit and purpose of the two plays. Thersites, more directly connected to the buffoon tradition, to Jonson's Carlo Buffone, is harsher and cruder in a play whose tone itself is harsher and cruder. Shakespeare's success in adapting the buffoon type in his later play may be inferred in Hazlitt's remarks on Caliban. Hazlitt makes the fruitful distinction between coarseness and vulgarity. Caliban is naturally coarse; Thersites is conventionally coarse, or vulgar. It is perhaps for this reason that Caliban does not arouse our aversion as Thersites does. Caliban reflects the radiance of *The Tempest*. His very curses have a cadence natural to him. His imagination is often fresh:

Pray you, tread softly, that the blind mole
may not

Hear a foot-fall [IV, i, 194-95].

Some of his speeches are among the most lyrical in the play, as that in which he describes the sounds and sweet airs of his isle, its thousand twanging instruments humming about his ears, and its clouds opening for him in his dreams.

Thersites and the buffoon thus supply one of the traditions which contribute to Caliban's character. The difference between Thersites and Caliban measures

the extent to which the old type has been modified. This difference may help explain the incongruity in Caliban's character which has been noted by some recent critics. Caliban is related to a character whose temper is antithetical to that of *The Tempest*. He needed to be made over, whereas Thersites was utterly in harmony with the temper of *Troilus and Cressida*. The evil, malignant side of Caliban derives from the old satiric type; the childlike, lyrical side derives from his new use in a graceful fantasy. The incongruity in Caliban may be due to the fact that he is a satiric type in a romantic play.

IV

The ways of creation are strange, naturally. It is not unusual for Shakespeare to carry over dramatic conventions from one play to another, even of a very different kind. Nor is it unusual for Shakespeare to transform diverse sources into so original a creation that the sources themselves are almost obliterated. Caliban may thus claim the buffoon as part of a motley ancestry, not all of which has necessarily been identified, but some of which has variously been proposed as the cannibals and savages of travel tales,⁹ the conventional monster or demidevil of the Elizabethans, stemming from the folklore of the ages, the aboriginal Indian, even the African slave. Prospero also may have had many antecedents in Shakespeare's mind other than Ulysses. Resemblances thus exist between Prospero and Hamlet, despite their obvious differences in dramatic realization and intrinsic interest. In

⁹ It has been suggested that the name "Caliban" is a transposition of the word "canibal," also that it suggests the essay "Of the Cannibals" by Montaigne, from which Gonzalo derived his wisdom. For a recent investigation of this tradition see R. R. Cawley, "Shakespeare's Use of the Voyagers in *The Tempest*," *PMLA*, XLI (1926), 688-726.

both, the faculties of reason and criticism are marked; both utter philosophical poetry; both manipulate their plots.¹⁰ Resemblances exist between Prospero and the dignified, self-controlled dukes of some of his earlier plays, like Theseus, that other lord of an enchanted world in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Even Iago and Richard III share with Prospero the features of dominant intellect and plot manipulation. Shakespeare's genius caught hints like these, assimilated them, and infused new creatures with life. The validity of an argument for one tradition does not necessarily depend upon its ability to exclude all other traditions.

We may ask: Why might Shakespeare in this particular case have adopted the methods of satiric drama for the purposes of romantic drama? One answer is pragmatic: he saw it could work. The method of commentators, although lending itself superbly to satire, as Jonson discovered, is not inherently satiric. It is a form which can be used for any kind of comment, satiric or otherwise. It is a method of direct address by the author in the very indirect vehicle of the drama. It can be put even to playful and autobiographic uses. Such uses Shakespeare made of it. The satiric buffoon became that incongruous mixture of demidevil and poet, the center of comic relief, Caliban. The role of official commentator was expanded into that of the looming, Shakespeare-like master of the island's revels, Prospero.

If, finally, we may try to pluck the heart of Shakespeare's mystery and indulge for a moment in an imaginative re-

¹⁰ Note also the parallel situation to *Hamlet* of a ruler, deposed by his brother, recounting his wrongs to his child. Cf. Prospero's

"My brother and thy uncle, call'd Antonio—
I pray thee mark me—that a brother should
Be so perfidious!" (I, ii, 66-68.)

and the ghost's speech in *Hamlet*, I, v, 40 ff.

construction of the unfolding of *The Tempest* in Shakespeare's mind, it would seem that the germinal idea was Prospero, who dominates and unifies the play. With him, the official commentator, was associated in dramatic convention and Shakespeare's own experience with satiric drama, the buffoon—Caliban. These two constituted the nucleus. Ariel was immediately added as a parallel to Caliban¹¹ and as an agent for Prospero. The

central figures of the play were together now, the supernatural agents of the enchanted island. The Caliban-Ariel strand was then complicated with that of Trinculo-Stephano. To this brilliant group Shakespeare added naturally the Ferdinand-Miranda love idyl, a mark of his dramatic romances, and the melodrama of Prospero's enemies. From such heterogeneous elements arose the timeless yet local world of Shakespeare's last masterpiece, by an act of creation similar to that of his first one, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Whatever the sequence of its development, however, *The Tempest* illustrates once again, in the cases of Prospero and Caliban, how Shakespeare's genius could shape material from the most unlikely sources for his own special purposes.

¹¹ Alan H. Gilbert, "The Tempest, Parallelism in Characters and Situations," *JEGR*, XIV (1915), 63 ff., makes an interesting case for Shakespeare's use of parallelism in the construction of *The Tempest*. Most of the characters, Gilbert points out, appear two by two. Besides the two supernatural creatures, Caliban and Ariel, there are two rulers (Prospero and Alonso), two lovers (Ferdinand and Miranda), two conspirators (Antonio and Sebastian), two lords (Adrian and Francisco), and two clowns (Stephano and Trinculo).

Advice from a "Gay Scholar"

If we are to comment usefully on Shakespeare and Gibbon, I ask for proof in classroom and lecture hall of the social relevance of those value judgments scholarship is supposed to be peculiarly equipped to render. Too often these judgments consist of the mournful assertion that other value judgments—those of the scientist, the social scientist, the educator—have no value at all. About fifteen years ago John Livingston Lowes said that the best brains were not going into scholarship, but into science and the social science. We shall now attract young men and women only in proportion as we show by our actions that scholarship is an act of social faith rather than an act of individual doubt. In that happy affirmation only can it live; in that affirmation only can it hope to play, in conjunction with science and the social sciences, its proper part in the life of modern men who are haunted by fear, racked by skepticism, and tormented by their loss of inward belief.—HOWARD MUMFORD JONES, "The Gay Science," in the autumn *American Scholar*.

The Crucial Question Regarding "Finnegans Wake"

ERNEST BERNBAUM¹

IN HIS judicious survey, *The English Novel in Transition: 1855-1940*, William C. Frierson devotes about two hundred pages to the period after 1900 and gives to the works of James Joyce not more than seven. Had *Finnegans Wake*² appeared in time to be considered, Dr. Frierson might perhaps have added another page or two. In any case, his judgment regarding the relative importance of Joyce among contemporary men of letters is approximately the same as that of the other historians of contemporary literature. To Joycean devotees this usual valuation is an outrageous underestimate. The publishers of the *Skeleton Key*³ call *Finnegans Wake* "the strangest and perhaps the greatest book of our time," and proclaim "its majestic logic, its humor, and its wise analysis of the meaning of the modern world." The authors of the *Key* say that the *Wake* is "a mighty allegory of the fall and resurrection of mankind, . . . a huge time-capsule, a complete and permanent record of our age, . . . yielding more for the present, and promising more for the future, than any work of our time." Edmund Wilson calls it "a very great poem, one of the top works [*sic*] of literature of our time," and

approvingly quotes T. S. Eliot's assertion that Joyce is "the greatest master of language in English since Milton."

Those who dislike Joyce and talk angrily about his lunatic derangement of the structure of our language have, in my opinion, paid too much attention to the style of his work and too little to its substance. The issue is not whether radical experimentation in style is objectionable. On that point we ought to be enlightened enough to make unnecessary the publication of such an essay as Jacques Barzun's on Joyce (*Saturday Review of Literature*, October 14, 1944) in which he revindicates the right of any author who believes he has discovered new truths to express them in a new way. We should all, I believe, agree that if Joyce, under Freudian or pseudo-Freudian influences, supposed he had discerned hitherto neglected traits of human life and feelings which could not be expressed by any vocabulary or syntax formerly used, and if he believed that the characteristic state of the human mind is erratic associational reverie, he should not be condemned for trying to shape a thereto appropriate new style, even if to do so meant what Campbell and Robinson term "the smelting of the modern dictionary back to protean plasma." Whether what started as a search for a means became with Joyce too largely an end in itself, a fetish-worship of his instrument, is an interesting but secondary question

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² James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*. New York: Viking Press, 1943. Pp. 628. \$5.00.

³ Joseph Campbell and Henry Morton Robinson, *A Skeleton Key to "Finnegans Wake"*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1945. Pp. xiv+365. \$3.50.

(the list of *Corrections*,⁴ more than nine hundred, some of them ludicrously petty, helps to confirm that suspicion). The crucial question, regarding Joyce or any other unconventional stylist, is this: Is the allegedly original vision of life which he is trying to reveal in so strange a fashion really true and really important? Campbell and Robinson evidently apprehend that to be the main issue; for their *Key* does not merely give a paraphrase which is somewhat clearer than the *Wake* itself, but in its Introduction, Conclusion, and footnotes, it repeatedly defends and praises Joyce's philosophy.

Basically the *Wake* consists of the dreams, murky and incoherent, dreamed during a single night by a loathsome Dublin tavern-keeper, H. C. Earwicker, who has committed some kind of sexual indecency in Phoenix Park, and through whose troubled dream-consciousness undulate the figures of his wife, Anna Livia Plurabelle, his twin sons, Shem and Shaun, and many other creatures, including a Donkey. Everything and everybody are shrouded under layer upon layer of allegorical veils. The Phoenix Park incident adumbrates the Original Sin in the Garden of Eden; the Donkey is the Logos; Shem (like Joyce) is the misunderstood, lonely, corrosive artist; Shaun is the shrewd worldling, capable of concocting best sellers and of advising girls to "collide with men, and collude with money"; and Anna Livia Plurabelle is the foul river Liffey, finally absorbed in her "cold, mad, feary father," the Irish Sea (which the interpreters, in their theological innocence, consider equivalent to a resurrection). The gross intimacies of coarse domestic and marital life are supposed to be representative of all human

existence, steeped, as they are, in persistent antagonisms—of male and female, age and youth, love and hate, life and death—polaric energies forever spinning the universe around and around. In its profoundest depths the allegory is alleged to shadow forth the morphology of human destiny, a dreary cycle of four ever recurrent ages—theocratic, aristocratic, democratic, and chaotic—with the suggestion that our age is passing through the last and shall willy-nilly be succeeded by the return of the first. The misnamed "resurrection," though Campbell and Robinson do not seem to perceive this, is nothing better than a return for a new fall.

The authors of the *Key* are tirelessly assiduous in seeking correspondences which the uninitiated might overlook. They are constantly hearkening for "overtones"; but sometimes they use that term to designate irrelevancies in the *Wake* that are difficult to explain reasonably. Now and then the relationships which they think they see between Joyce and other authors (Blake, Swift, etc.) appear farfetched. Some of the alleged allegorical correspondences are merely formal, emphasis upon such reflecting a kind of weakness to which other devoted interpreters of Joyce (e.g., Harry Levin) are prone. I doubt whether we are much enlightened by speculations like the following. "There are four walls in the room"; "There were four Evangelists, ergo the walls speak gospel truths"; or "There are Four Ages in Vico's philosophy of history, also in Goethe's, in Spengler's, and in Joyce's, and therefore their significance must be similar." But the aberrancies of this kind are relatively minor weaknesses. A greater obstacle to accepting Campbell and Robinson's exaltation of *Finnegans Wake* as an epoch-making allegory of cosmic significance is the fact that such gross

⁴ James Joyce, *Corrections of Misprints in "Finnegans Wake."* New York: Viking Press, 1945. Pp. 16.

and distraught vulgarians as Earwicker and Shem, as Joyce characterizes them, cannot convey such grave ideological burdens. They may illustrate an age of chaos, but they cannot interpret or transmute it. They do not captivate our imagination, convince and elevate it, as do the allegorical beings of Rabelais and Swift, in whom universal ideas are expressed through unforgettable individual and representative personalities. To maintain that Joyce's degraded and mentally obfuscated creatures can suggest the soul of the whole world, its past and future history in all its variety of achievements and potentialities, is to carry fanatical worship to phrenetic excess.

Near the close of the *Key* Campbell and Robinson reach the height of their great argument in these audacious generalities:

Finnegans Wake is also a Treasury of Myth. . . . The complexity of Joyce's imagery results from his titanic fusion of all mythologies; and his genius shows itself in his application of these to the special traits of the modern day. *Finnegans Wake* is fellow to the Puranas of the Hindus, the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the Apocalyptic writings of the Persians and the Jews, the scaldic Poetic Edda, and the mystical constructions of the Master Singers of the ancient Celts. In such anonymous productions of the human spirit, shaped by many hands and minds, there is to be found an astonishingly constant under-pattern of archetypal characters and themes. These are the characters and themes of *Finnegans Wake*. They are the forces of the human soul. . . . Beneath our constricting coats and vests we are Man the Hero . . . triumphant . . . sublime. . . .

To refute all the errors in these sweeping and enthusiastic assertions would be a lengthy, though instructive, undertaking. I restrict myself to a few essential corrections.

First, the assertions go much further than warranted by any evidence in the *Key*; indeed, the last sentence is clearly

contradicted by the tenor of the evidence therein presented. What Campbell and Robinson are attempting to do is to magnify the importance of their subject by insisting that Joyce's arbitrary and loose reassemblage of a few relatively unimportant ancient types and themes should be looked upon as the absorption and transmission of the great central traditions about man and his destiny—when, in point of fact, *Finnegans Wake* is an embittered hostile protest against those very traditions.

Second, there is, indeed, "an astonishingly constant under-pattern of archetypal characters and themes" in the great myths of world history (as well as an intellectual and spiritual evolution in religious beliefs, which Joyce and his disciples ignore); but it is not the main features of that pattern that are repeated in the *Wake*. Lord Raglan's *The Hero*, to mention only one of the really learned books in this field, traces the development of some of these patterns through one phase—a limited one, but much nearer the important central current than those haphazard eddies which Joyce is occasionally influenced by.

Third, what is pretended is that Joyce fused all the mythologies; and even if we charitably assume that what is meant is all the important ones, the claim is fallacious. Now and then the authors glibly and bizarrely speak of Christ, in connection with Krishna, the Buddha, Osiris, Thor, Finn MacCool, etc.; but when they name mythologies which their Titan Joyce is supposed to have "fused" they mention those of the Egyptians, Persians, Jews, Norse, and Celts, but—in my opinion significantly—not the writings of Christianity. The *Key* throughout shows no firm grasp of the comparative history of the great myths and religions. Joyce's actual place in that history is trivial and

usually hostile to the main upward movement. His contribution to the criticism of life is essentially secular, without Christian hope, faith, and charity; and, like Spengler's contribution, it is deeply pessimistic.

Joyce and his followers believed that "in every aspect of society" (see the *Key*, p. 363) there is nothing but "the perversion, the decay, and the disintegration of religion, love, and morality." What they saw in life was "hypocrisy . . . prurien- cy . . . the measuring of all values by mercantile standards . . . a literate but basically ignorant bourgeoisie." The last five years, and their victorious conclu-

sion, have dramatically shown us that human nature and society are not so hopelessly evil and abject as Joyce assumed; that the decent part of mankind can, if it will co-operate, control the course of history; and that, without supinely awaiting any Spenglerian or Joycean cataclysms, the redemptive intellectual and spiritual forces within humanity can lift it to higher levels. *Finnegans Wake* is a characteristic literary phenomenon of the lamentable era which has now ended; it will continue to be of interest as a historical curiosity, but it is a product of a concluded past, not an inspiring force to shape our future.

*The Last Battle of El Cid*¹

GEORGE H. DAUGHERTY, JR.²

I. EL CID LIETH ON HIS DEATHBED

My lord *El Cid* lies dying
Within Valencia's wall.
For grief, and care, and grim old age
The noblest heart appall.
El Cid lies in Valencia
Brought low by pain and strife.
Mid travail sore and bitter war
Now flickers low his life.
And still the war-cloud lowers
Upon his dying hour;
The Moorish chieftain, Búcar,
Has come with all his power.
And thirty kings are with him;
Their armies fill the land.
They've a thousand score of men of
war;
Of horsemen, many a band.
Upon his bed of sickness,
Weary and racked with pain,

¹ From *El Romancero del Cid*, 104, 105, 107.

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El Cid now prays to God on high
To save His own again.
To guard His vassals' honor,
In these, their desperate straits,
Against the Moorish armies
That camp without the gates.

II. EL CID COUNSELETH HIS VASSALS

Around his bed have gathered
The priests and noble lords,
His friends and grieving henchmen
To hear his weighty words.
"My friends, it is far better,
When ill fate may betide,
To fight with gallant courage
Than conquer kingdoms wide.
Whate'er kind Heaven grant you
That gratefully receive.
Think not of rights demanding.
Nay, do not thus believe.
I die, but not a stranger,
Alone, on foreign soil.
Yea, here in mine own city
I find relief from toil.
I grieve not at my dying!
Be, therefore, not downcast,

For all who die inherit
 The kindly earth at last.
 This life is but an exile,
 A journey fraught with pain,
 And we who march through gates of
 death

Come to our home again.
 Now treat ye well my soldiers;
 Trust in your own good swords.
 For loyal men and clanging blows
 Are safer guards than words.
 Stint not rewards of valor,
 Yet must ye inspire fear.
 Remember to keep in balance
 The judgment scales ye bear.
 The heart of one true vassal
 Is better far to prize
 Than thousand flattering praisers
 And traitors' honeyed lies;
 For out of many bad men
 Ye cannot make one good.
 Yet him who comes in sore distress
 Ne'er offer insult rude.
 Repay not honest service
 With promise far away;
 All service true and faithful
 Must ye in kind repay.
 Now comes the dread, dark mistress
 Who summons kings and all:
 The lord, the serf, the mighty.
 I, too, must heed her call.

III. EL CID GIVETH HIS LAST COMMAND

Now hear my last commandment.
 It is my dying will.
 Rodrigo Díaz de Vivár,
 I am thy leader still.
El Cid the Moors have called me,
El Cid Compéador.
 I now commend my soul to God,
 My body to your care,
 Of earth I came; in earth once more
 My body do ye place.
 Yet first I would attack the Moor
 In battle face to face.

When my last breath has left me,
 Embalm with unguents rare.
 Once more my helm and broadsword,
 Mine armour I would wear.
 Then harness Babiéca
 My gallant white war-horse.
 Bolt upright in his saddle
 Ye must tie this key-cold corse.
 Our case, I know, is desperate.
 The Moor in ambush waits.
 Yet form your column boldly,
 And charge them at the gates.
 Unfurl my Red Cross banner
 And place me in the van.
 Once more I'll face King Búcar
 And defeat him, man to man!
 When once the Moor is routed,
 Do not tarry or delay.
 In San Pedro de Cardénas,
 At Burgos, I would stay."

El Cid now ceased his speaking.
 Now tolled his passing bell.
 Then entered in Jiména
 To bid her lord farewell.
 The priests and noble warriors
 With weeping eyes withdrew.
 They might not tarry longer
 Or intrude upon these two.

IV. EL CID, THOUGH DEAD, GOETH FORTH TO BATTLE

Rodrigo Díaz de Vivár
 In death lies cold and still.
 His faithful henchman, Díaz,
 Now carries out his will.
 The body they embalméd;
 All still and straight it lies,
 With bold and ruddy features,
 And fierce, wide-open eyes.
 His beard spreads out upon his chest;
 Alive he seems, not dead.
 Then Gil Díaz ties braces
 Behind his back and head.
 So braced, and in his armour,
 They place the rigid corse

Bolt upright in the saddle
 Of his tried and gallant horse.
 Alive, *El Cid* now seemeth
Alive, the Moors to greet!
 His helm and shield he beareth,
 Steel shoes protect his feet.
 His sword, *Tizona*, famed afar,
 They tie in his right hand.
 Full many a Moorish man of war
 Has fled that battle-brand.
 Upon his shield and surcoat
 The blazoned arms are bright,
 The Castle, Cross, and Lions
 In colors, black and white.
 No longer can the Christians,
 Besieged as they are,
 Sans food and reinforcements,
 Hold off the Moor, *Búcar*.
 Yet will they not die tamely,
 That were unworthy fate!
 As midnight strikes its deadly hour
 They muster at the gate.
 The dead *Cid* is their Leader;
 Christ's faith is in their hearts!
 Against the Moorish army
 The Christian column starts.
 At *Cid's* right hand the bishop,
Jerónimo, doth ride.
 Upon his left rides *Gil Díaz*
 As *Babiéca's* guide.
 Ahead of all the vanguard
 Rides forth *Bermúdez* grim.
 He waves *El Cid's* war banner.
 Four hundred follow him.
 Around the *Cid's* dead body,
 One hundred are the brave.
 Each man hath sworn to give his life
 That war-like corse to save.
 Next come the noble ladies;
Jiména with them rides.
 Six hundred valiant knights-at-arms
 Protect them on all sides.

V. THE CHRISTIANS DRIVE THE MOORS HEADLONG

Softly they ride, and softly,
 Throughout that breathless night.

They seem no more than twenty,
 Their horses tread so light.
 The dawn breaks on *Valencia*,
 Silent the city stands.
 Now furious ride the Moorish hosts
 To seize the Christian bands.
 The first of all the Christians
 To charge the wily Moor
 Was vengeful *Alvar Fáñez*
 He sought to strike *Búcar*.
 Astonished then was *Fáñez*,
 Just as he aimed his blow,
 To see a warrior woman
 Armed with a Turkish bow.
 The name of this fair archer,
Estrella—"Shooting Star";
 Because her aim was deadly,
 Her fame had spread afar.
 Behind her ride a bevy,
 A hundred Amazons,
 Each fully armed and ready
 To slay the Spanish Dons.
 This bodyguard King *Búcar* sends
 In hopes of quick surprise.
 But the *Cid's* men slew those damsels
 Before King *Búcar's* eyes.
 King *Búcar* and his vassels,
 Astonished, think they see
 A host of sixty thousand
 Grim Christian chivalry.
 Their fear makes them see falsely;
 They cannot count the host.
 'Gainst threescore thousand warriors
 They know their battle lost.
 They think they see an army
 All gleaming like the snow;
 And one in front who leads them,
 His features well they know.
 Full well they know that figure,
 They know that wintry beard.
 They've fled from many a stricken field
 When e'er *El Cid* appeared!
 He rides a great white charger,
 His blazing sword in hand.
 They fear his Red Cross banner;
 They fly; they cannot stand.

And now Bermúdez charges
 With all his valiant men.
 Among the craven Moorish hosts
 Great slaughter made they then.
 King Búcar and his vassal kings
 In headlong flight they ride.
 They gallop downward toward the sea;
 Their ships are on the tide.
 They throng the shore and vessels,
 They plunge into the wave.
 More than ten thousand thousand
 perish.
 Themselves they cannot save.
 Fierce are the grim pursuers,
 Their sword arms dripping red.
 Each man bears at his saddle bow
 A severed Moorish head.
 Among the coward vassal kings
 Twenty are drowned or slain;
 Bucár, more agile than the rest,
 Escapes *El Cid* again.

The valiant Christian army
 Has scattered wide the host;
 And now they seize the booty
 The flying Moors have lost.
 They heap the gold and silver
 In piles upon the ground.
 The poorest soldier now is rich
 With what he there has found.
 Once more the Christian army
 Set forth upon their way.
 Their master thus has bade them;
 His word they will obey.
 Through days of weary marching,
 His spirit guides them still
 Along the road to Burgos
 In the kingdom of Castile.
 There in Saint Peter's Convent
 The great dead doth remain.
 In San Pedro de Cardeñas
 Lies the hero of all Spain.

Finis of THE LAST BATTLE OF EL CID

A Major General's "Reading Period"

As I look back on my days in the Philippines . . . all of us read everything we could get our hands on. In fact, we read almost to the point of memorizing.

I worked through an algebra book many times, and at times, when I allowed myself a bit of mental amusement, I thought back over my school days at Boys' High in Atlanta when I struggled with this subject. Had I known then that I would pass my time in a prison camp with an algebra book, I don't think I would have worried so much and burned the midnight oil when I wanted to be out with the gang.

Being an Atlantan, I naturally got a big thrill over a copy of *Gone with the Wind*, which I read and reread six times. I can now say I am an authority on Rhett Butler and Scarlet O'Hara, to say nothing of the South of that era. I reviewed Shakespeare many times also; but the one book I spent much time really studying and enjoying was *Adventures in Contentment* by David Grayson.—MAJOR GENERAL EDWARD P. KING, JR., as reported in the *Chicago Sun*, September 25.

The Program for Improving Students' Use of English at the University of Illinois

EDWARD F. POTTHOFF¹

IN THE fall of 1940, upon the request of its Board of Trustees, the University of Illinois began a consideration of the problem of how to improve students' use of English. Since that time many studies have been made of the problem, a Senate Committee on Student English has been established, a Writing Clinic has been placed in operation, a number of new regulations have been put into effect, and provision has been made for obtaining the co-operation of all staff members in improving student English. This article presents a brief statement of the program as it has developed so far and of the basis upon which it rests.

Early in the consideration of the problem, surveys were made of articles in professional journals which deal with freshman college rhetoric and of the ways in which more than four hundred colleges and universities handle the problem of student English.² Questionnaire studies were conducted on the teaching of English in the high schools of the state of Illinois,³ and a statistical analysis was

made of the academic progress and records in the University of Illinois of all students in an entering class whose performances in the first required rhetoric course were unsatisfactory. An inquiry was addressed to the heads of all university departments to determine the extent to which, in their opinion, graduates of the institution had a command of English which was inadequate to their professional needs. Another inquiry, addressed to a large number of personnel officers and executives of business concerns which employ many college graduates, was designed to determine the types of deficiency which such employees exhibit in their use of English. Analyses were also made of the quality of writing which students, particularly upperclassmen, exhibit in examination papers, reports, and other written materials.⁴

These studies and others made it clear that large proportions of college graduates and of upperclassmen are deficient in their use of English and that steps should be taken to remedy the situation. A survey of the university faculty in 1941 showed that 85 per cent of those who responded voted in the affirmative on the question "Do you favor making a satisfactory proficiency in English (by whatever method to be determined) a requirement for graduation?" The pro-

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² Jessie Howard and Charles W. Roberts, *The Problem of English Composition in American Colleges and Universities* (University of Illinois Bull., Vol. XXXVIII, No. 48 [July 22, 1941]). Pp. 94.

³ Edward F. Potthoff, "The Teaching of English Composition in the High Schools of Illinois," *Illinois English Bulletin*, XXXI, No. 1 (October, 1941), 1-15, and "The Problem of Teaching Youth To Use the English Language Effectively," *ibid.*, No. 2 (November, 1941), 7-11.

⁴ H. N. Hillebrand, W. F. Ekstrom, J. N. Hook, Jessie Howard, and E. F. Potthoff, "The Quality of Students' Writing as Revealed by Final Examination Papers" (University of Illinois, May, 1940). Pp. 34. (Mimeographed.)

gram now in effect includes such a requirement with respect to the use of written English, and students' proficiency in oral expression is being studied in order to determine what measures need to be taken in this area.

The program relative to written English was designed for the purpose of assuring that students who receive undergraduate degrees from the university have a satisfactory proficiency in everyday writing. By this is meant that their written expression should (1) be reasonably free from faults and errors in spelling, punctuation, paragraphing, grammar, sentence structure, and diction; (2) be clear, accurate, unambiguous, and coherent; (3) be properly planned with respect to relationships among details, organization of paragraphs, and development of a well-defined thesis; and (4) avoid verbosity, omit extraneous materials, and include necessary details. These specifications are intended to place the emphasis upon actual skill in written expression and the thinking which is basic to it, rather than upon technical knowledge of the rules and principles of language and composition.

As the initial step in the program, all entering freshmen are given a placement test at the beginning of their first semester in the university to determine whether they are qualified to enter the required rhetoric course (Rhetoric 1).⁵ Those who fail are not allowed to register in this course, but they must qualify for it either by passing a three-hour noncredit elective course (Rhetoric 0) or by repeating and passing the placement examination. If they have not qualified by the beginning of their third semester, they must

withdraw from the university until they show, by passing the test, that they are ready for Rhetoric 1.

Rhetoric 0, which is an elective course, does not grant credit. Students who demonstrate during their first three weeks in the course that they are properly qualified for Rhetoric 1 are transferred to the latter course at the end of that time. This procedure guards against mistakes in grading the placement tests. Students who complete Rhetoric 0 and pass the course are regarded as having qualified for Rhetoric 1; those who fail must repeat either Rhetoric 0 or the placement test. Students who do not elect Rhetoric 0 may make up their deficiency by tutoring, correspondence study, or in any way they choose; but they are advised to follow some systematic plan of preparing for the examination, which is given at the beginning and end of each semester.

In order that Rhetoric 1 and 2, the required freshman work, may make a maximum contribution to improving students' use of English, the attention in these courses has been centered on the fundamentals of correct expression. Considerable training in using oral English in the everyday situations of life has been introduced, and the basic textbooks have been changed from technical and literary discussions of the niceties of artistic expression to practical treatments of the basic essentials of composition. A system of proficiency examinations enables students who already have the required degree of skill in the use of English to obtain credit for either or both of the freshman courses without taking them. Students who fail Rhetoric 1 or 2 must repeat the course.

The Committee on Student English gave careful consideration to numerous problems in the staffing and instruction of the required rhetoric courses. Several

⁵ See Cornelia P. Kelly and Charles W. Roberts, "Rhetoric Proficiency Tests at the University of Illinois," *Illinois English Bulletin*, Vol. XXXI, No. 6 (March, 1944). Pp. 1-24.

studies were made of the local situation and of practices in other institutions. The committee has presented to the department of English a series of recommendations which are designed to increase the tenure, maturity, and competence of the rhetoric staff and to create a more favorable "atmosphere" for teaching and advanced (graduate) study in the field of English language and composition. These recommendations, which relate to the selection and training of new members of the rhetoric staff, to salaries, salary increases, and opportunities for advancement in rank for members of the staff, and to provisions for graduate study in English language and composition are intended to bring about much more favorable conditions for the pursuit of rhetoric teaching as a field of professional endeavor.

Studies of the writing of university upperclassmen showed that many students who receive a grade of D in Rhetoric 2, the second semester of the required course, write satisfactorily later; that is, improvement takes place. And, on the other hand, some students who receive a grade of C in the course may later write unsatisfactorily; that is, retrogression occurs. In general, the data showed that, although grades of A or B in Rhetoric 2 almost invariably forecast satisfactory writing later, grades of C or D are not sufficiently reliable indexes of what students' subsequent upperclass proficiency in English will be.

The Committee on Student English therefore considered various procedures which may be used for discovering the upperclassmen whose writing is unsatisfactory, such as a written examination given for that specific purpose, an analysis of student papers prepared in various courses, and the method of having instructors report to a central office any

student whose writing they consider deficient. In view of the available evidence, the best method seemed to be that of a written examination; it is the most equitable and straightforward of all the procedures, and it has fewer serious shortcomings than either of the others.

The chief limitations of the examination method are (1) that, if students who already are very proficient in the use of English are required to take the test for upperclassmen, they may regard it as an imposition and (2) that staff members will find the reading and evaluation of the papers a time-consuming process. The data already cited, however, indicate that students who receive grades of A or B in Rhetoric 2 will continue to write satisfactorily while in the university and therefore need not be subjected to such an examination. Exempting them reduces the total number of papers by 40 per cent and therefore greatly lightens the burden of grading papers; at the same time, it gives due recognition to the most deserving students, namely, those who are already very proficient in the use of English. Moreover, such a system of exemptions should have a considerable motivating effect upon many students who might ordinarily receive grades of C or D in Rhetoric 2.

In view of the foregoing facts, a satisfactory proficiency in the use of written English was made a requirement for all undergraduate degrees awarded by the Urbana divisions of the university; and in order to assure such proficiency, all undergraduates who pass the Rhetoric 2 course, or the equivalent, with a grade of C or D, or the equivalent, are required to take an English qualifying examination before graduating. Students who pass the examination are regarded as having met the graduation requirement; those who fail must take an extra one-

semester course in rhetoric (Rhetoric 5). Those who fail Rhetoric 5 must repeat either this course or the qualifying examination, a passing grade in either case being prerequisite to graduation.

The qualifying examination occupies a three-hour period; the first hour consists of a test on the mechanics of expression, and the last two hours are devoted to the composition of a theme which is mainly expository in character. The test on mechanics requires students to indicate the points in a list of sentences in which errors in grammatical usage occur, to select the proper punctuation marks for another group of sentences, to designate words which require capitalizing, and to detect misspelled words. The theme, which is expected to be from five hundred to seven hundred words in length, is written upon a topic chosen by the student from a long list of subjects supplied at the time of the examination.

Since an additional rhetoric course is required of students who fail the qualifying examination, it must be given early enough to permit them to take this course—and even to repeat it, if necessary—before they reach the end of their senior year. But, on the other hand, since the quality of some students' writing may undergo considerable improvement or deterioration after they complete Rhetoric 2, the examination should not be placed at too early a point in their university careers. The examination is therefore normally required at the end of the sophomore year, except that at least one semester must have elapsed since the student received credit in Rhetoric 2. The interval between this course and the examination gives the student time to make whatever preparation he may wish for the test and provides a period during which he is likely to exert at least some

effort to maintain, if not to improve, his writing proficiency.

The Committee on Student English is in general charge of the qualifying examination but has the assistance of carefully selected members of the rhetoric division in preparing the questions and in grading the papers. Each theme written on the second part of the test is appraised by at least two readers. The individual schools and colleges of the university decide at what point those students who fail the examination shall take Rhetoric 5, but the general policy is to require this course as soon as possible.

Rhetoric 5, which gives three hours' credit, is designed as a remedial course covering the essentials of college rhetoric, its general purpose being to enable students to attain the level of writing proficiency required for graduation from the university. In order that the grades assigned in the course may be directly indicative of this proficiency and place the emphasis upon its attainment, they are based entirely upon students' performance in the final examination, which is equivalent in every respect to the qualifying examination.

It will be noted from the foregoing that a student whose writing is unsatisfactory passes through a series of steps in which his deficiency may repeatedly come to light. Moreover, the values of proficiency in written English, together with the consequences of his failure to attain it, are pointed out to him at each step. The emphasis throughout is placed upon the importance of the students' acquiring and maintaining a certain level of skill in writing rather than upon merely passing another examination or taking an additional course.

A Writing Clinic was established, on an experimental basis, by the rhetoric division in the fall of 1944. This clinic,

which is open on a purely voluntary basis to any student in the university, is designed to analyze the writing difficulties which he encounters, to provide the advice necessary for him to remedy them under his own "power," and to determine the effectiveness of his remedial efforts. In general, the clinic seeks to help the student up to the point where he can exercise intelligent self-direction in overcoming his difficulties; it does not supervise writing or provide tutoring. The clinic was established partly in order that students who have difficulty in meeting the graduation requirement already discussed would have no ground for objecting that the various facilities necessary to enable them to meet it are not available to them. A Speech Clinic, maintained to help students in correcting speech defects, has been in operation for a number of years.

From the outset of the study of the problem it has been recognized that success in improving students' use of English is dependent upon the willingness of the entire faculty of the university to accept a share of the responsibility. But effective faculty co-operation cannot be achieved simply through an act of legislation; it can best be attained if a program of definite co-operative activities in which individual staff members can engage is designed and if the machinery necessary to stimulate such faculty participation is established.

In view of these facts, the Committee on Student English obtained authorization to plan and initiate a program of faculty participation. This program contemplates that a staff member may co-operate in such ways as impressing upon students the importance of proficiency in the use of English, providing them with frequent opportunities for using it, checking the quality of their English and

insisting upon high standards in its use, referring students to the sources of aid available in seeking improvement, and acquainting them with exemplary writings in his own field of specialization. These types of faculty activities, however, may require analysis into more specific procedures or provision of special materials, and the Committee on Student English is responsible for meeting these needs.

The committee was so organized that it contains a representative from each of the undergraduate colleges and schools of the university. This representative serves as a liaison officer between the committee and the division to which he belongs; he is charged not only with representing that division but also with effectuating in it the plans made by the committee for obtaining faculty co-operation. The committee is authorized to have each of its members solicit the assistance of the dean or director, the department heads, and any appropriate committee of his college or school in interesting and informing faculty members with respect to the program of co-operative activities. Such co-operation is regarded as one of the most important and essential steps in solving the problem of improving students' use of English.

Finally, the Committee on Student English has recognized that it still faces a very large number of problems which represent a research program of considerable magnitude and complexity. Many of these problems can properly be investigated only by an expert or by a number of them working together. The committee has, therefore, recommended that it be authorized to establish, with the co-operation of the rhetoric division, a Joint Commission on Research in Student English, whose function it would be to

plan and conduct studies useful in making further recommendations for the improvement of students' use of English. The establishment of the Research Commission will round out a comprehensive program in student English, except as studies still to be completed may lead to

requirements relative to proficiency in oral expression. The effectiveness of the program has not yet been determined, however; hence it is subject to modification in the light of future studies, particularly those of the Research Commission.

A Quick Placement Test for Veterans

R. C. WILLIAMS, S.J.¹

SINCE the demobilization of our armed forces will, of necessity, be irregular, colleges and universities in the next year or two will be admitting discharged servicemen at other than the usual times for matriculation. Furthermore, many of the veterans returning to college will have completed one or another of the refresher courses in English prescribed during their military training. These facts pose a problem for the college English teacher.

Some veterans will enrol too late for the usual freshman placement test in English or will be spared the embarrassment of taking it along with students entering directly from high school. Others will be given college credit for the refresher courses they have taken and exempted from at least the first semester, if not the entire freshman course, in composition.² Hence the teacher of the second-

semester freshman course, of sophomore advanced composition, or even of some lower-division course in literature, will face the problem of determining the relative knowledge and skill of the group before him. To help solve this difficulty, I have stumbled upon an unusual thirty-minute test which the teacher can have duplicated. (I hereby waive any copyright privilege and *College English* will do likewise.)

Originally devised for use in the refresher course given to Army Air Corps trainees, this short test has proved remarkably accurate with hundreds of students, both military and civilian. In no instance did results vary more than 5 per cent from those of standardized tests which are both more expensive and require more time to administer. This test is not meant, however, to supplant standardized tests where budget, time, and circumstances allow these to be given; for such tests are obviously more complete and thorough. Nevertheless, the test I submit will readily give the teacher an accurate indication of the student's

¹ Member of the department of English, Creighton University.

² Though English teachers may doubt the wisdom of thus exempting veterans, administrators are the ones who will make the decision. For practical reasons, the decision is almost certain to be in favor of exemption. Yet English teachers cannot overlook the fact that many refresher courses were given hurriedly or under such conditions that it was almost impossible for them to accomplish the objectives of even one semester of the usual freshman course. Furthermore, there is the telling fact that in ten

thousand examinations administered by the United States Armed Forces Institute the lowest scores were in English composition, according to the naval officer in charge of these examinations at Madison, Wisconsin.

working knowledge of English composition. Moreover, it can be administered rather informally or even humorously, since the errors will amuse a majority of the students.

Here is the test (which should be type-written, double spaced):

Directions: Correct every error in grammar, punctuation, and spelling between the lines on this sheet.

We was down by the crick fishing yestrday when the tunder and lightening begun. They said it caused noticable damage in certain places. Coming in from the fishing trip, a big oak tree laid in the road. After we set down for a while, we got our breathe, then we pulled it off of the road. Since it was very heavy. All of we boys must of use all our strengt. My mussels is still soar. When we finished, a airplain come by. Rite afer it come a motocycle cop. He sayed alrighit boys thats a fine job. Its a good thing you coulda been hear, otherwise somebody might of been killed. Some peopel never learn nothing about driveing. To many drivers never thinks of other. When we reached home my dad sayed he knowed we was alright, but my mother sayed she was escared allmost all the time we

was gone. I don't guess we shoulda went out with them clouds in the skie. When Im a aviater Ill pay more intention to the whether.

How to score: Subtract two from one hundred for each obvious error which the student fails to correct. (Better students will often append a note to the effect that mere correction of the obvious errors is not enough, since the essay should be re-written in its entirety.)

It should be noted, I believe, that this is almost a direct transcription of a conversation I overheard in a barber shop! Spelling and punctuation errors were, of course, my own contribution. Some of these crept in by accident; but when I later revised the test and eliminated the accidental errors, I discovered a notable decrease in the accuracy of results. Hence I returned to the original form in every detail. Let the teacher who uses this test, therefore, beware of changes; for accident or Providence seems here to have achieved something which better laid plans can easily make go agley.

English Grammar with a Halo

ROLAND D. CARTER¹

INSTRUCTORS whose teaching includes classes in freshman English must have noted recently a new attitude toward English grammar. I refer to the inclination to regard grammar as a narrow science, the knowledge and practice of which are reserved to a few people who have acquired an uncanny "know-how."

English grammar was, for long years, one of the constants in education—basic, cultural, and essential. It was for everybody who went to school. More than merely one of the studies, it represented a "condition" in education—a stage of learning. It was primary in any general curriculum and preceded any specialization. Learning the fundamentals of English grammar was like learning that the earth is round; that heat causes expansion; that two plus two equal four.

Grammar is now coming to be regarded as one of the special techniques. In the experience of teaching we are reminded that students no longer are to be expected to parse words or diagram sentences—that such processes are the peculiar work of a specialist in grammar. As only the surgeon must operate, so only the grammarian must conjugate verbs or know syntax. (In popular education the grammarian is anybody who knows something about grammar; this skill makes him a bluenose—and as such he is not envied.)

I do not agree that grammar is difficult enough to be placed among the special

techniques. Grammar should be a matter of general information. As the growing of a flower or a vegetable in one's backyard does not necessitate the extensive knowledge of the botanist or horticulturist, so the selection and combination of words for reasonably clear expression of thought should not call for the special skill of an expert. When we begin to speak or to write, we at once begin to depend upon word relationships; syntax is immediately in force; and, as word follows word, some sort of language becomes recognizable. To be effective, language must meet the first requirement, which is correctness. Correctness is based upon grammar, for grammar is the framework, the chassis, of the vehicle of thought.

Many people drive their vehicle of thought largely through imitation. Driving as they see others drive, they follow practices that too often are both unsound and unsatisfactory. Since they must follow tracks and trail the other fellow's lights, they are not free to cruise down less crowded ways and over new routes where there might be variation, fresh scenes, and invigorating interests. Not being able to map their journey, they can never know at any given time where they may be. These "drivers" are delayed by indirection and are embarrassed by blundering into dead ends.

Again, it is well known that ideas are both measured and classified by their wording. An indirect, inexact, incongruous sentence results from an indirect, inexact, and doubtful groping after an

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idea. A defective sentence projects an idea at a discount, while a sentence having the expected conventional parts in proper arrangement carries the thought at face value at least. Logical sequence and development of an idea depend upon a correct combination of words to articulate the thought, for a thought is not quite born until it has been expressed, or at least felt, in terms of words.

Students—and many other people—have the belief that talk and most speech can be carried on irrespective of language rules and principles; that practical speech is really second- or third-story, and that the walls and floors do not need foundation. Many people who claim to be sticklers for quality in their food, dress, entertainment, etc., apparently are satisfied to practice language usages too poor to bear the stamp of any recognized standard. The English instructor finds in this social quirk his most difficult problem—getting students to feel the need of improving their language habits and to love “discipline toward exactness” in word combinations.

Unfortunately, many professors in departments other than English fail to assume proper responsibility for the use of grammar. They accept from their students the poor sentence structure and speech forms which they rail at the English department for not correcting. This is a serious condition, because through the gap between departmental responsibilities many students, especially non-English majors, find an escape from whatever emphasis the English department may have placed upon grammar.

One can make an interesting association between the recent disposition to delegate (and relegate) grammar to the realm of special techniques and the some-

what earlier tendency to reduce the difficulty of courses in mathematics and Latin. Frankly, it seems likely that some of the late fathers of education, having failed to find in their students either the industry or the persistence sufficient to acquire a reasonable knowledge of English grammar, neutralized the condition by declaring that, perhaps after all, grammar should not be strictly required of every student. (There is no crime, of course, after the law has been removed.)

Is this tendency to delegate English grammar to the province of experts simply another evidence of our modern specialization? Is it a sign of greater and closer interdependence of people and a more respectful recognition of some caterer's line of service? Must we resort to sentence technicians as we do to beauty specialists, bone specialists, and garage mechanics?

Or is one's criticism of his sentences and word relationships an aboriginal and antiquated skill? Does it belong to the days of necessity when people carded the wool to make their homespun clothes; tanned hides and pegged the leather into shoes; and made their log houses substantial with mortice and pin? Has the grammarian become a seer, a diviner, a purveyor of strange knowledge? Is grammar occult? Is the construction or unraveling of a sentence the staging of a seance?

Euclid declared that there is no royal road to mathematics. Many generations have thought him correct in that attitude toward learning. The path of education need not be an obstacle course, but honest educators sometimes wonder how much genuine education will remain if the inclination to delete trouble spots continue.

Current English Forum

Conducted by

THE NCTE COMMITTEE ON CURRENT ENGLISH USAGE

[NOTE.—During the current school year the "Forum" will consist of a series of short articles on grammar and usage instead of the usual questions and answers. However, readers are invited to continue sending in questions on language problems. They will be answered by letter; some extended answers may furnish articles for the published series.]

Double Is Nothing

COLLOQUIAL English seems to have an indigenous and unswerving affection for the double negative. Although, as a construction, the double (or, for that matter, the multiple) negative ranks high in the English teachers' lists of solecisms, the common speech employs it in all its forms with freedom and frequency. In fact, even in formal discourse, the double negative has its place, and to set an absolute prohibition on it is to lose an effective rhetorical instrument.

We must not fall into the error of assuming that all double negatives are in bad usage. One form of literary understatement native to English is composed of just such a construction:

We were not ungrateful.
Such ideas are not uncommon.
His reward was not inconsiderable.
He is not unworthy of the honor.
She was not unkind to me.
His claim was not without merit.

Though Fowler, for example, in agreement with other authorities, deprecates this approach as precious or overelegant and suggests avoiding it, he admits that it is valid and even "congenial to the English temperament" and idiom.¹ Such doubling may be circumlocutionary, but it is definitely allowable.

The Leonard study, *Current English*

¹ *Modern English Usage*, pp. 382-83.

Usage, established yet another type of double negative on the intermediate ground of "disputable." The examples are:

We haven't but a few left.
I can't help but eat it.

However, Marckwardt and Walcott, in their supplementary discussion, list the latter as "Literary English,"² while Curme finds some extenuation for the former on the ground that *but* is often felt to have little negative force and so needs aid.⁴ Of course, such doublets as *hadn't hardly*, *hadn't scarcely*, or *hadn't only* are unquestionably taboo, although it might well be pointed out here that, like *but*, these adverbs carry little negative force or meaning and hence, to the casual speaker or writer, may need additional negative support.

Yet another form of the repeated negative is in good usage:

No, I don't want any.

Regardless of any arguments that may be advanced on grammatical, rhetorical, or syntactical grounds, the fact remains that such a sentence as the foregoing is in multiple negation—as is the vehement "No, no, a thousand times no!"—yet they are in good use, formal or otherwise.

Let us now consider the double and

² P. 130.

³ *Facts about Current English Usage*, p. 44.

⁴ *Syntax*, p. 140.

multiple cases in which a speaker or writer uses a sentence with two or more of the following: *no*, *not*, *nothing*, *none*, *never*, *neither*, and *nor*. Standard works on grammar are very explicit on this point, and doubling is flatly and unanimously condemned. The approach is logical: If you *haven't nothing*, then you have *something*. This same reasoned analysis of the multiple negative by Latin-minded grammarians and logical school teachers led, in the history of our language, to the formal outlawing of a psychologically and historically normal construction.⁵

That rule holds, despite the fact that, carried to its logical conclusion, if even-numbered negatives are affirmations, then odd-numbered negatives must still be negations.⁶ Thus, a triple negative would still be a negative, while "No, no, a thousand times no," which comes to 1,002 negatives, is therefore an affirmation, so that the lady in the song is unwittingly issuing an invitation to her lupine pursuer. This is all chop-logic. Surely, as Hayakawa points out, no court would regard "I haven't killed nobody" as a confession of guilt, i.e., that the speaker *had* killed *somebody*.⁷ To quote Greenough and Kittredge: "Two negatives may make an affirmative in logic but they seldom do in English."⁸

A rhetorician, it seems to me, should impeach the multiple negation on the ground of redundancy. It is a repetitious and uneconomical usage and actually unnecessary. Although Fowler disapproves of the double negative in his *Modern English Usage*,⁹ he does so on the ground that it is pleonastic. Mrs. Aiken expresses the same objection,¹⁰ and so do most teachers of

rhetoric. The second, third, and fourth negatives in line are certainly superfluous.

On a historical basis, however, the multiple negative has standing as an indigenous part of our language or, for that matter, of many languages¹¹ (cf. the Spaniard's *No se nada de nadie*). In Old English, negatives were often prefixed to the verb as well as to other words in the sentence that admitted of contracted forms. If there were none, an extra negative might be added.¹² Chaucer's multiple negations were legion, and Shakespeare has had dozens deleted by his modern editors. Both Marckwardt and Jespersen cite numerous examples of this tendency in great writers, even of the not-too-distant past.

Nor are the writers of the past alone in this respect. Curme and Jespersen find modern writers using the double negative, and the Fowlers have a section of *The King's English* filled with delicious examples taken from prominent modern sources.¹³ In these cases the extra negative has often been added for negative force where needed.

Actually, this desire for intensification is the underlying cause of most multiple negatives. A child yells, "No, no, no, . . ." as if the accumulation of negation were a bulwark against frustration or pain. Curme compares multiple negation to driving "two or three nails instead of one, feeling that they will hold better than one."¹⁴ Jespersen notes "this heaping of negatives" because of the speaker's fear that "if the negation were expressed once only, it might be easily overlooked. . . . He spreads . . . a thin layer of negative colouring over the whole of the sentence. . . . This may be called pleonastic, but it is really not illogical."¹⁵

Any student or teacher of English will testify to the widespread colloquial use of

⁵ Jespersen, *Modern English Grammar*, V, 451; Aiken, *Commonsense Grammar*, p. 246; Sweet, *New English Grammar*, Part I, p. 438.

⁶ Aiken, *op. cit.*, pp. 232-33.

⁷ *Language in Action*, p. 225.

⁸ *Words and Their Ways*.

⁹ P. 383.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 33.

¹¹ Jespersen, *op. cit.*, p. 450; see also Hall, *English Usage*, pp. 75-77.

¹² Sweet, *op. cit.*, pp. 437-38.

¹³ Pp. 332-34.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 139.

¹⁵ *Essentials of English Grammar*, p. 302.

the double negative.¹⁶ Mencken goes so far as to say: "In Vulgar American, the double negative is so freely used that the simple negative appears to have been almost abandoned";¹⁷ but this statement is obviously hyperbolic and epigrammatic. More scientific studies like that in the *Linguistic Atlas of New England*, Volume II, indicate that the multiple negative is normally avoided by the overwhelming majority of cultured people interviewed, although about 50 per cent of New Englanders at large use it "frequently." Such evidence is far more dependable and temperate than Mencken's.

Certain conclusions about the double negative are inescapable: (1) In certain usages, the double negative is valid and correct, although somewhat artificial; (2)

although educated usage eschews the double negative, a large segment of our population employs it frequently in colloquial usage; (3) grammatical handbooks and teachers of English almost unanimously condemn the double negative; (4) cumulative negation has a valid historical basis in English, as well as a strong psychological justification; (5) in language, two negatives do *not* necessarily make a positive; (6) the double negative is avoided in educated usage in periodicals, books, essays, speeches, conversation, radio programs, and even casual talk.

Until a heavy weight of evidence can be cited to the contrary, the double negative stands as an interesting construction in English, deep-seated in the vulgate but pruned out of general cultivated language.

J. C. B.

¹⁶ See Aiken, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

¹⁷ *The American Language* (4th ed.), p. 468.

Summary and Report

RECENT NUMBERS OF THE *Saturday Review of Literature* contain lead articles of considerable pertinence for teachers of English. The annual education issue is that of September 15, with its guest editor, Harry J. Carman, dean of the College of Columbia, Columbia University, writing upon the topic, "Setting Our Sights for Tomorrow." Stephan Duggan, director of the Institute of International Education, contributes an article on "Education under the New Order"; Walter A. Knittle, director of adult education of the College of the City of New York, in "Mohammed and the Mountain" describes New York's new method of decentralizing adult education by sending instructors to groups rather than requiring fifteen or more adults to travel long distances to an instructor; Ordway Tead, chairman of the Board of Higher Education, New York, discusses "Learning for Living or Earning?"; Mark Starr, educational director of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, reviews the educational activities of labor unions in "The Coming Great Expansion in Public Education"; in "Learning from the Ground Up" Frank Tannenbaum, professor of Latin-American history at Columbia University, distinguishes between the objectives of school education in rural and urban areas; and, finally, Alvin Johnson, director of the New School for Social Research, in "Education in an Atomic Age" gives reasons why we "are not prepared for the New Day, the day of the atomic bomb, the day of world civilization or utter destruction." This issue of the *Review* is definitely worth a trip to the library to read.

AN IMPORTANT ARTICLE, "THE Mind of the Negro," subtitled "Notes on the Effect of Environment upon Intelli-

gence," by H. A. Overstreet appears in the September 8 issue of the *Saturday Review*. He summarizes the progressive findings which have resulted from 1905 to the present from administration of intelligence tests with reference to the Negro. Recent findings completely disprove the statement that "science has proved that the Negroes are mentally inferior." After more than thirty years of the most vigorous testing, writes Mr. Overstreet, "science has proved nothing of the sort. But it has proved convincingly that environment can make a whale of a difference to the mind of any man, black or white." Furthermore, continues Overstreet, "tests of intelligence are, as often as not, tests of *what communities do to the minds of their people*. We now know that I.Q.'s can be improved by better surroundings. A generally low test score, therefore, in any part of the country and among large numbers of its inhabitants, may merely reveal that in that region society is an enemy of its people."

"IS THE SCIENTIST-SCHOLAR READY for Leadership?" by Joseph A. Brandt, challenges all teachers. He states categorically that "American scholarship, as it is at present constituted, is hopelessly inadequate to give the people intellectual and spiritual leadership; and unless our people have such leadership, all the battleships, all the planes, armies, and atomic bombs and all the words in the treaties of peace soon to be written will not avail us against a future war." He poses the questions: "Has the American scholar been honest with the people? Has he not been more concerned with the ephemeral glory of a reprint, paid for by him, sent to the president and a hundred other wastepaper baskets, than with a world slowly going toward a lingering, agonizing death? . . . There can no

longer be delay on the part of our scholars. A world is aflame with doubt, terror, hatred; that flame can be quenched only by the scholar, writing in the loneliness of his study, but writing with a passion for the right, for the welfare of the people, of whom he is at present one of the most ignored, but among whom he may ultimately rank without a peer." This also is in *Saturday Review of Literature*.

THE AUTUMN ISSUE OF *COMMON Ground* is the fifth anniversary issue of that magazine, published by the Common Council for American Unity. The purpose of both Council and magazine is to help create among the American people the unity and mutual understanding resulting from a common citizenship, to further an appreciation of what each group has contributed to America, to overcome intolerance and discrimination because of national origin, race, or creed, and to help the foreign-born and their children solve their special problems of adjustment. The literary quality of both the essays and the fiction of this anniversary number is high, as is usually true of this stimulating and fact-facing magazine.

ANOTHER ANNIVERSARY IS BEING celebrated this fall, by the *Yale Review*, its thirty-fifth. The autumn number, along with several other articles of interest, contains "The Resistance and Literary Revival in France" by Henri Peyre, an extremely important account of the amazing activities of French men and women of letters during the occupation and since then. According to Peyre, "the most striking literary phenomenon has been the sudden and immediate appeal of poetry to a wide audience and the eminent quality of much of the poetry produced during the war years." John Erskine, in "The Dickinson Saga," writes an amusing, reminiscent account of Emily's relatives in the days when they still lived in Amherst and Erskine was a young instructor at the college there.

THE CURRENT NUMBERS OF THE *Atlantic Monthly* contain serialized chapters of a new biography of Tolstoy by Ernest J. Simmons, new head of the Russian department of Cornell University. Chapters which have appeared concern Tolstoy's youth. Chapters on his maturity will appear during the winter.

"HOW THE FRENCH WRITERS KEPT Going," by Peter Rhodes, in the autumn *Virginia Quarterly Review*, tells in detail of the underground resistance movement, how newspapers were printed and how manuscripts were written and transported under the eyes of the Nazis. Rhodes was a foreign correspondent in France before the war and subsequently did radio intelligence work for the Psychological Warfare Branch. The article, written from personal knowledge and experience, is crammed with facts and very vivid.

"T. E. LAWRENCE: SOME TRIVIAL Memories," by Margot Hill, appears in the same issue of the *Virginia Quarterly*, relating some of the author's knowledge of Lawrence both before and after he became famous. As she says, Lawrence had a many-faceted personality, and she writes only of one, but that one is different and interesting.

THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS FORMALLY announced the establishment of the Office of International Information and Cultural Affairs—or O.I.C. The O.I.C. will operate under William Benton, new assistant secretary in charge of public and cultural relations. After December 31 the O.I.C. will conduct the overseas information service taken over from the Office of War Information by the State Department's new Interim Information Service—or I.I.S. The announcement said that the O.I.C. functions would be to promote freedom of information throughout the world, further international exchange of persons, knowledge, and skills, and co-ordinate programs of other federal agencies with over-all United States foreign policy.

FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN THE theater, two important articles appear in the October *Theatre Arts Monthly*.

"AUDIENCE TOMORROW: PREVIEW in New Guinea," by Elia Kazan, predicts a more critical and discriminating theater audience when the boys get back. From his observations of G.I. audiences in New Guinea, Kazan feels "the fellows who come back will be demanding" both of movies and of stage plays that they will "have to be good to survive." For the returned veterans, "having lived a lot in a very short time, having seen men in every state of emotion, recognize what is genuine and real, but will not let pass what is postured and spurious."

"TOWARD A NATIONAL THEATRE," by Robert Porterfield and Robert Breen, presents a plan for a United States Public Theatre Foundation. As the editors remark, the scheme presented provides for many different kinds of activity in many places; it emphasizes decentralization; and, while demanding professional standards, it does not in any way disturb existing procedures either in the professional or nonprofit theater but, on the contrary, aims to enlarge the scope and effectiveness of the best theater everywhere. Many elements of the plan are suggested by the successful functioning of England's Committee for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts. Everyone interested in the American theater will find this article provocative and stimulating.

"THORNTON WILDER'S THEATRE," is discussed by Henry Adler in the British periodical *Horizon*. Most of the British quarterlies in recent issues have concerned themselves less exclusively with the political and economic problems of the war and are again beginning to find room for a few literary essays. Mr. Adler's is one of the most interesting from the American point of view, for in it we find a Britisher analyzing the art of an American playwright and discussing the productions of two of his plays currently playing in London. Adler is especially interested in Wilder's art of fusing

the individual and the symbolical and points out the possible influence of the Chinese drama and the Japanese *nō* drama in Wilder's "passion for compression." He analyzes particularly *Our Town* and *The Skin of Our Teeth* and concludes that "Wilder's technique is not for everyone. But he has written some beautiful and moving plays. And by demanding imagination in the theatre, he has shown how the drama may be pried from strict chronological sequence and the static scene to achieve a new agility and scope, and a poetry that celebrates the miracle of life."

MANY AMERICANS PROBABLY think of Edith Sitwell merely as a writer of prose, and to them especially the essay on "The War Poetry of Edith Sitwell," by Maurice Bowra, in the last issue of the *Cornhill* magazine will be revealing. Bowra discusses her current poetry, contrasting it to her earlier experimental work in which she "set herself that hard task of restoring to English poetry the richness of texture which had been largely lost in the Edwardian and Georgian epochs." He feels she has contributed much to the progress of English poetry and quotes convincingly to prove. The summer and autumn issues of *British Life and Letters* carry chapters from her forthcoming book, *Fanfare for Elizabeth*, a biography of Queen Elizabeth during the period of her childhood.

THE AUTUMN *KENYON REVIEW*, AS the fourth in its series of "Reconsiderations," contains an essay by Eric Bentley on the dramatist, August Strindberg. In Bentley's opinion Strindberg is "more than an outstanding Swede"; he is "the outstanding Swede. He is the one Swede who rightly belongs in the main European tradition," and Bentley analyzes the plays to illustrate his point.

EMILY DICKINSON APPEARS IN the pages of the *Kenyon Review*, as in many another current magazine. F. O. Matthiessen's "The Problem of the Private Poet," in the *Review* compares interestingly with the Erskine article mentioned above. Matthiessen

sen points out that her "great gift was for poetic thought," but she possessed no comparable power for versification. Her *Bolts of Melody*, recently published, and much of the evidence given in *Ancestors' Brocade* shows that Emily Dickinson's way of writing continued to illustrate Emerson's conception of the Poet. "That she believed no less than he that poetry could be written only in all-sufficient moments of inspiration is apparent from the state of her manuscripts." He concludes that "discrimination, therefore, is imperative if the Emily Dickinson boom is not finally to collapse in deflation."

THE AUTUMN *AMERICAN SCHOLAR* is excellent throughout. Paul Robeson contributes "Some Reflections on *Othello* and the Nature of Our Time." *Othello's* world "was breaking asunder. Medievalism was ending, and the new world of the Renaissance beginning." So now "we stand at the end of one period in human history and before the entrance of a new." Howard Mumford Jones, in a felicitously phrased address before the American Council of Learned Societies, celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary, printed in the *Scholar* and entitled "The Gay Sciences," inquires whether "the nineteenth-century postulates of scholarly activity are not now outmoded," points out that "unless learning is socially relevant, learning is, and remains, antiquarianism," and concludes that "learning must regain a quality that I do not know how to characterize unless I recall the title of one of the best of the Victorian books on criticism, Eneas Sweetland Dallas' *The Gay Science*. What it needs is joy." A third essay, by George F. Whicher, entitled "Frost at Seventy," takes the occasion of the poet's birthday to analyze the sources of his power and why he wears so well. Among other reasons he finds that "Frost's distinction is precisely that he has maintained during a time of general disillusionment his instinctive belief in the tradition that lies at the core of our national being, the tradition of liberal democracy."

A NEW SERVICE FOR "RADIO-minded teachers, club advisers, and discus-

sion leaders" is offered by the *American Mercury* and called "Script-of-the-Month." Scripts will be issued monthly, based on current new articles appearing in the *American Mercury*. (Any teacher who accepts for school use any material supplied by a magazine or other commercial organization should examine it carefully to be sure that it is free from obvious or subtle propaganda.) Free copies of these scripts may be obtained by writing to Radio Department, *American Mercury*, 570 Lexington Avenue, New York 22, New York.

A REPORT ON THE FIRST SIX TESTS in English composition with sample answers from the tests of April and June, 1944, prepared by Professor Edward S. Noyes, Yale, chief reader and examiner of the College Entrance Examination Board, in collaboration with Professor William Merritt Sale, Jr., and Professor Marshall Stalnaker, has been published by the College Entrance Examination Board. The report was written at the request of many teachers and should be of much interest to all. One introductory paragraph will indicate its significance:

When, under wartime conditions, the acceleration of college courses forced the abandonment of the old June session of three-hour comprehensive examinations, the series of aptitude and achievement tests offered as a substitute was at first entirely objective in type. For one year, no candidate examined by the College Board had to do any connected writing on any test. In response to a widespread demand, the Board voted to include among the achievement tests of April 1943 and thereafter a one-hour test in English composition which should be of the essay type. Such a single-essay test has been offered at four sessions in 1943 (April, June, September, December), and at two in 1944 (April, June). At each of the April sessions more than ten thousand candidates wrote the English test; although at the other sessions the number was much smaller, more candidates took English than any other achievement test. These facts indicate not only the importance of the English composition test in the eyes of schools and colleges, but also the responsibility of the College Entrance Examination Board for making it as significant and reliable an index as possible.

Books

THE SCHOLARLY PROFESSION

Literary Study and the Scholarly Profession gathers into book form the series of lectures, known as the Walker-Ames Foundation Lectures, given by Hardin Craig at the University of Washington in 1944.¹ The book records the aims and problems of the author as a scholar and teacher during nearly half a century. The ten lectures included discuss such topics as the scholar's general field of action and endeavor, opportunities for humanistic study, methods, the function of literature, and the equipment of the scholar. There is a final section on colleges and universities in a postwar world.

The book is not militant. The author of these lectures is no viewer-with-alarm or tense exhorter. Its tone is serene, often genial. He faces the realization that "the home, the church, and the school are all giving ground before a wave of thoughtless social, commercial and material diversion, and that the institutions of higher learning themselves are suffering from defeat." But he faces this realization without perturbation. If he is no propagandist, eager to overturn old ways, neither is he too committed to the past. Changes of curriculums may be expected to come. They always have come. The method and conduct of courses are constantly being re-examined. But he does not anticipate the demise of the liberal arts, which have served the Western world for more than a thousand years and which still have vitality and adaptability. To him the main purpose of education is still to enlarge and illuminate our ideas of man's nature and his destiny. He keeps his faith in a life devoted to literary scholarship and intellectual values.

¹ Hardin Craig, *Literary Study and the Scholarly Profession*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1944. Pp. xiii + 150. \$2.25.

Dr. Craig sees no hopeless breach between literary scholarship and literary interpretation or between literary research and teaching. He comments that "it is as perilous for humanists to reject science and social science as it is for scientists to reject the humanities." But it is the humanities that speak to the individual immediately and directly. It is they, not time and study directed toward the outside world, that bring him inner development. He does not believe that the standard curriculum of the sciences and liberal arts is "outmoded" and that it is desirable to study in college only those things that will serve practical life. He would like to see the old-time belief in discipline restored, greater industry fostered, and greater seriousness and higher goals. He pleads for a more extensive and broader aim in the acquisition of knowledge. It is no radical revision that is required but greater intellectual vigor and the "atmosphere" that genuinely interested and scholarly professors can create. Factual training and individual study and discipline are needed, as in the past.

An appreciative word is spoken by the author for small colleges. In these, he reminds us, are often to be found a vigorous intellectual atmosphere and stimulus to industry and perseverance which sometimes the possession of large libraries, laboratories, and a staff of professors with Ph.D.'s does not produce. Too many hours devoted to red tape, interviews, and conferences may detract from or make impossible study and research needed for growth. Sometimes a sound educational program has to adjourn for a cloud of methodology and technical language, for student advising, for social improvement. All these are no substitute for the fine scholar pursuing whatever method he chooses to pursue. For stimulus to hard work there is needed the influence of a pro-

fessor who knows his stuff, believes in it, and works at it. Unless he does so, his students can hardly be expected to do so.

For many university readers the author's essay on the equipment of the scholar is of interest, especially, perhaps, the comments on graduate as over against undergraduate study. Dr. Craig finds only one factor that distinguishes the former from the latter, that is, careful and critical inquiry or examination in seeking facts and principles. For the graduate student there should be emphasis on activities or principles directed toward the discovery of truth. He questions extreme specialization. He does not believe in multiplying minute course requirements for doctoral candidates. Attention should go to investigation rather than overmuch to acquisition of knowledge. Like most members of graduate faculties, he holds that literary activity cannot take the place of research, in the training of the scholar. The composition of poetry or the writing of a novel or a drama cannot properly be recognized in awarding doctorates.

The foregoing are only a few of the leading ideas of *Literary Study and the Scholarly Profession*. Professor Craig gives his readers something worth thinking about on every page. He is a scholar of diversified interests and of exceptionally wide experience. The graduate of a small college which obviously gave him a good start, he took his Master's degree and his Ph.D. at Princeton. His various research projects have taken him to Oxford, the British Museum, the Huntington Library at Pasadena, and he is familiar with continental European universities. He has instructed at Princeton, the University of Minnesota, and the University of Chicago. He headed the English department at the University of Iowa, next was called to Stanford, and he is now at the University of North Carolina. He has not confined himself to narrow fields but likes an outlook over the whole. Often he is ranked primarily as a Renaissance scholar, but he has made definite contributions in other fields, such as the medieval drama. He has shown himself to be a thorough scholar of such divergent authors

as Swift, Byron, and Poe. The projects occupying him at present are the editorship of a complete edition of Shakespeare and collaboration in the making of a history of English literature.

LOUISE POUND

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA

ENGLISH AT WORK¹

English at Work: Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening makes a fresh, coherent, and dynamic approach to the problems of first-year English. Primarily a reader, the book appears as a product of influences recently emanating from the University of Chicago.

Its essays and selections are grouped under three headings: "Reading for Comprehension," "Reading for Opinion," and "Reading for Implications." The first, presenting fourteen examples of scientific and semi-technical exposition, aims to develop analytical proficiency in reading, to relate "English" to other subjects of study, and to stimulate interest in new fields. The second, furthering these objects, endeavors also to develop the faculty of critical judgment. In its thirty-seven selections, such writers as Thouless, Veblen, the Beards, Krutch, Lippmann, Lerner, Chase, Agar, and Willkie present problems ranging from economics, education, and political and social theory to the peace and the future course of America. The third approaches fiction, drama, and poetry through twelve "problems" in such selections as "Ozymandias" and the first chapter, respectively, of *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Return of the Native*.

Each of the sixty-three selections is followed by a detachable exercise, consisting of true-false statements, questions on thought and structure, vocabulary lists of the best-answer type, problems in library reference, and suggestions for "Writing, Speaking, and Listening." Interspersed throughout the

¹ Phil S. Grant, Justine Van Gundy, and Caroline Shrodes, *English at Work: Reading Writing Speaking Listening*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1944. Pp. x+365.

book are ten evaluation charts for appraising talks.

Working from the principle that "reading and analysis of content" afford "the material out of which the other processes shall grow," this text achieves unusual integration of the various activities of the introductory course, even at the points where the book ventures uncertainly into the areas of "speaking" and "listening." Its success in this integration is a measure of the vitality of the underlying, dynamic philosophy of education that everywhere informs it. Its emphasis upon the disciplines of reading, however, can lead in practice to underemphasis upon another fundamental consideration from which equally valuable disciplines arise: No paper or talk can be functional, that is, intrinsically worth reading or listening to, unless there is inherent in its structural or selective principle a freshness, a distinct newness, a definitive novelty of some kind—preferably of meaningful basic idea, but *at least* of application, illustration, emphasis, or reader or audience adaptation. If there is not, it can be only a poor and useless imitation of that which it parrots and botches. And this freshness or novelty of idea, slant, twist, or focus, in which the very *raison d'être* of the piece consists, is not to be attained through encouraging or even permitting washed-out repetitions of other men's ideas or the pres-

entation of shallow, tangential commentaries upon them. A reserve of skepticism may also be permitted regarding the educational efficacy of true-false questions, which tend to emphasize discrete facts and inconsequential details and also demand greater accuracy of construction than they ever receive or are worth. Nor can any workbook escape the danger that the performance of its exercises, especially if they are cumbersome to correct, may degenerate into careless and perfunctory routine.

The book may be used, however, as well as misused. It can be effectively adapted to teaching not merely in average classes but also in slow and superior sections. The student who applies himself to it should leave the course with an increased vocabulary, a more developed ability to analyze, comprehend, and judge reading matter at the college level, a headful of new attitudes and new ideas, and a mind aerated and considerably sharpened. This book is on the move. If each succeeding text for freshman English exhibits as much resourcefulness, fundamental philosophy, and general competence as *English at Work*, there is prospect of progress. It is a text worth careful consideration.

ANDREW J. GREEN

ARIZONA STATE COLLEGE

In Brief Review

[Mention under this head does not preclude review elsewhere.]

FOR THE GENERAL READER

Modern Man Is Obsolete. By NORMAN COUSINS. Viking. \$1.00.

An amplified version of the editorial which ran in the *Saturday Review of Literature* on August 18. The Board of Education in New York sent an abridgement of the article to seven hundred high-school principals. Rarely has an editorial elicited such general and enthusiastic commendation.

The White Deer. By JAMES THURBER. Harcourt. \$2.50.

You may read it as a fantasy embroidered with wit and humor, but you will chuckle over the doctor who analyzes his own ailments, the clerkly person

who enjoys red tape, and the clever people who help and hinder the king and his three princes. Of course, there are an enchanted maiden, enamored princes, and a lot of symbolism. Illustrated. Don't miss it.

The German Talks Back. By HEINRICH HAUSER. Introduction by HANS J. MORGENTHAU. Holt. \$2.50.

In "A Notice to the Reader" the publisher criticizes the author of the book and gives reasons for its publication. Hauser calls himself an anti-Nazi but violently states his German patriotism and his belief in Prussianism and is now returning to Germany to live, leaving his family here. The publisher believes that Hauser is representative of "a dominant state of mind in contemporary Germany" and that he is telling us things we should know.

The Peacock Sheds His Tail. By ALICE TISDALE HOBART. Bobbs-Merrill. \$2.75.

The scene is laid in Mexico. There are three generations of old Spanish Catholic aristocracy in the grand Navarro house. The oldest son's wife has Aztec blood. Foreign exploitation of Mexico, particularly of oil wells; the growing dissatisfaction of peasants, practically slaves on the great plantations; labor organizations; and the struggle for reforms are a background for the marriage of a Navarro girl to a young United States diplomat. Good.

Woman without Love. By ANDRÉ MAUROIS. Harper. \$2.50.

A study of a young woman who had been repressed and thwarted by incompatible parents and by a frustrated English governess. Lonely and curious, she reads romantic novels and poetry, dreams of a role of saintly grandeur and a passionate prince. Maurois has created a complex character in a setting of Parisian society not in harmony with American ideals. Polished prose.

Cass Timberlane. By SINCLAIR LEWIS. Random. \$2.75.

Grand Republic, Minnesota, is not on the map. Judge Timberlane, recently divorced, just over forty and lonesome, loved at first sight Jinny Marshland, just over twenty. His friends, mostly married couples, welcomed her as the Judge's wife, but she found them a bit stuffy. The homes and marital affairs of each couple are freely discussed, as are those of "An Assemblage of Husbands and Wives." There is no normal, happy couple in the story. Subtle, satirical, sordid, smart—and readable.

The Small General. By ROBERT STANDISH. Macmillan. \$2.50.

The author has an intimate understanding of Japanese and Chinese characters. This story is based upon the Chinese ownership of a mysteriously productive mulberry orchard and the underground efforts of a fabulously wealthy Japanese silk-procureur who determines to possess the secret of it. The foibles, life, and manners of the Chinese, the business acumen of the Japanese, are vividly portrayed: Good.

Album of American History, Vol. II: 1783-1853. Edited by JAMES TRUSLOW ADAMS. Scribner's. \$7.50.

More than thirteen hundred illustrations. The first volume covered the Colonial period, presenting a visual history of life in the colonies. Volume II takes up this picture narrative with the Revolutionary War won and colonists turning their attention to more gracious living, to the beginning of manufacturing and shipping, to building canals, to the westward movement. It shows tools they used, the houses they built, their furnishings—America growing up.

Big Business in a Democracy. By JAMES TRUSLOW ADAMS. Scribner's. \$2.75.

The author goes back to Babylonia for the history of the development of big business. With General Motors as an example, he makes a strong case for big business as a necessary means of providing jobs and a better standard of living. He believes that our war production and government ownership prove that private enterprise in a democracy provides a better, fuller life for the working man.

The West Window. By L. P. HARTLEY. Doubleday. \$2.50.

A study of a sensitive English boy and his older, dominating sister. The story has charm and has met with warm praise from English critics. It may easily have less appeal to American readers.

The High Barbaree. By CHARLES NORDHOFF and JAMES NORMAN HALL. Atlantic. \$2.00.

Two survivors cling to a destroyed Catalina flying boat in the Pacific. Awaiting rescue in the terrific heat, an Iowa boy dreams of his home town, a seafaring uncle, and tales of a tiny island marked "Existence doubtful." His dreams extend to a rescue, natives, tropical beauty, and his old love. Unusual.

My Favorite War Story. Compiled by the EDITORS OF LOOK. Whittlesey. \$2.50.

Thirty-four true tales by famous American war reporters—Ernie Pyle, Vincent Sheean, Robert St. John, Ira Wolfert, and others. Biographical sketches and photographs.

The Forest of the South. By CAROLINE GORDON. Scribner's. \$2.50.

Sixteen moving, dramatic stories of pioneer America. All have the South and her people as scene and characters. Some are tragic, some humorous, some for sportsmen.

Virginia Woolf: Her Art as a Novelist. By JOAN BENNETT. Harcourt. \$2.00.

In her Prefatory Note Miss Bennett says: "This book is about Virginia Woolf's vision of human life, and it is about her sense of values and it attempts to analyze the form of her novels." As interpreter, Miss Bennett analyzes Mrs. Woolf's writing in generous quotations.

Good Troupers All: Starring the Life and Times of Joseph Jefferson. By GLADYS MALVERN. Macrae Smith. \$2.50.

The Jeffersons were a group of remarkable personalities. This story of an era of the American theater includes glimpses of the careers of other favorites: John Drew, Maurice Barrymore, Henry Irving, Julia Dean, and many others of the 1829-1905 period. Illustrated with playbills, theater programs, reproductions of old prints, etc. Entertaining.

The Perennial Philosophy. By ALDOUS HUXLEY. Harper. \$3.00.

In the Introduction, Huxley says: "If one is not oneself a saint or a sage, the best thing one can do, in the field of metaphysics, is to study the works of those who were. . . ." So he has taken excerpts from the religious writers of the last three thousand years and with his own commentaries has woven them into a treatise illustrative of his own personal religion—a love of God above self.

The Far Away Music. By ARTHUR MEEKER, JR. Houghton. \$2.50.

By the author of *Ivory Mischief*. Jonathan Trigs, who has harkened to faraway music, returns to his Chicago family in 1840, to find his prosperous city very conventional. Satirical.

Heritage of Fire. By FRIEDELIND WAGNER and PAGE COOPER. Harper. \$3.00.

Richard Wagner's granddaughter writes of her family and a world of music, of their friendship with Hitler and how she turned from nazism to America.

The Portable F. Scott Fitzgerald. Edited by DOROTHY PARKER. With an Introduction by JOHN O'HARA. Viking. \$2.00.

Representative short stories and two complete novels, *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender Is the Night*.

Last Leaves. By STEPHEN LEACOCK. Dodd, Mead. \$2.50.

Short discussions of various tastes common to people, and serious pieces about Canada and America and the postwar world.

One Nation. By WALLACE STEGNER and the EDITORS OF LOOK. Houghton. \$3.75.

A "Life In America" Prize Book. A text-and-picture story of our minorities, with possible means of creating tolerance. Important.

Not in Our Stars. By JOSIAH E. GREENE. Macmillan. \$3.00.

A long novel, with many characters, of an ingrown small community of workers for a large dairy. All the faults of small village life, the envy, hate, lust, and gossip peculiar to people poorly paid, with few interests and little talent for living or working. A few have ideals for a better world. Winner of the Macmillan Centenary Fiction Award for Service Men. Good.

The Wisdom Tree. By EMMA HAWKBRIDGE. Houghton. \$3.50.

A colorful study of the structure of great religions, showing the likenesses more striking than the differences. Halftones and line illustrations.

The Crusades: The Whole Story of the Crusades. By HAROLD LAMB. Doubleday. \$3.50.

Iron Men and Saints and The Flame of Islam, telling the story of the Crusades, here appear in one volume. End sheets and line-cut illustrations.

Promised Land: A Collection of Northwest Writing. By STEWART HOLBROOK. Whittlesey House. \$3.50.

An anthology of the literature of the Northwest during the last fifteen years.

The Russian Story: The Coming of Age of a Great People. By NICHOLAS MIKHAILOV. Sheridan House. \$2.75.

The noted historian and geographer presents a vivid history of Russia, with emphasis upon the growth of the nation.

America Is West: An Anthology of Middlewestern Life and Literature. Edited by JOHN T. FLANAGAN. Minnesota Press. \$3.75.

Eighty-four authors, new and old, are represented by stories, articles, and poems—all concerned with the Mississippi Valley. The collection as a whole represents a people and a pattern of life: Lincoln, Twain, Eugene Field, Sandburg, Sinclair Lewis, and many others. The organization is by such topics as—"The Green Valley," "Folk Lore and Legend," "The Indian, Explorer and Traveler."

Texas: An Informal Biography. By OWEN P. WHITE. Putnam. \$3.50.

Mr. White writes with the exuberance of a man who knows the land and the men of the bowie knives, the long rifles, the longhorns, and all the legends of a powerful state. Illustrated with photographs and old prints.

The Cherokee Strip. By MARQUIS JAMES. Viking. \$3.00.

This jestful story is based upon boyhood experiences in Oklahoma: upon old stories heard from "Mr. Howell," an Oklahoma character, from Auntie, the old slave, from his father; and upon the family tales of his mother—the girl who did see Jesse James. Later memories of newspapers and old-time printers are of added interest.

The Rocky Mountains. By WALLACE W. ATWOOD. Vanguard. \$3.75.

"American Mountains" series. The reader is taken on a camping trip, seeing the gorgeous scenery and listening to the tales of early days. Photographs, maps, end-papers.

FOR THE TEACHER

Paradise Lost in Our Time. By DOUGLAS BUSH. Cornell University Press. \$2.00.

Four important essays on Milton. As Professor Bush remarks in the first one, "Modern Reaction against Milton," indifference or hostility to Milton

"is not a mere matter of liking or disliking a particular poet; it belongs to the much larger question whether the tastes and standards of our generation reflect spiritual health or disease." The other titles are "Religious and Ethical Principles," "Characters and Drama," "The Poetical Texture."

Philosophy in American Education. By BRAND BLANSHARD, CURT J. DUCASSE, CHARLES W. HENDEL, ARTHUR E. MURPHY, and MAX C. OTTO. Harper. \$3.00.

A discussion of contemporary trends in philosophy and methods of philosophical instruction, with specific proposals for change, by five leading university teachers of philosophy.

The Profane Virtues. By PETER QUENNELL. Viking. \$3.00.

Four studies of the eighteenth century, "each the portrait of a man obsessed with an idea." These are Boswell, Gibbon, Sterne, and Wilkes.

Cenci: A Stage Version of Shelley's Cenci. By ARTHUR C. HICKS and R. MILTON CLARKE. Caxton. \$3.50.

There are only five recorded productions of Shelley's play before 1940. In March, 1940, the Bellingham Theatre Guild, of Bellingham, Washington, gave the sixth. This volume presents the text of the acting version used by the Bellingham group to stimulate other companies to stage it. A preliminary essay describes the earlier productions.

FOR THE STUDENT

Handbook of Basic English. By TOM BURNS HABER. Appleton-Century. \$1.25.

Aims to give a complete condensed description of its subject.

Learning Basic English. By I. A. RICHARDS and CHRISTINE GIBSON. Norton. \$2.00.

The methods book of the subject for English-speaking readers. The text, beginning with vocabulary and proceeding to the rules, the simplification of grammar, translation and interpretation, is supplemented by practical exercises.

English Composition for Spanish-speaking Students. By MARGARET NANCE DE BESOSA. Crofts. \$3.00.

Designed by a member of the faculty of the University of Puerto Rico to meet the special problems encountered in teaching English to Spanish-speaking students. Differences between Spanish and English usage have been emphasized. Idioms and words included are those found to be frequently misused by Latin-Americans speaking English.

The English Heritage. By EDWARD H. WEATHERLY, HAROLD Y. MOFFETT, CHARLES T. PROUTY, and HENRY H. NOYES. 2 vols. Ginn. \$3.00 per vol.

An anthology which in its first volume covers the periods from Beowulf through Edmund Burke. The second volume starts with the early nineteenth century and comes down to the present day. Despite the breadth of time covered, the books are of handy size and the text large and clear. The number of selections in each volume is purposely made less than in most anthologies by the banishing of many minor figures. The authors have aimed to offer "a representative body of vital and interesting literature, sufficient in quantity, value, and difficulty to warrant a year's intensive study."

The Asian Legacy and American Life. Edited by ARTHUR E. CHRISTY. Conclusion by PEARL S. BUCK. John Day. Pp. 276. \$3.50.

An amazing revelation of the debt our American culture owes to the cultures of Asia. Some of our borrowings have been direct; some, indirect, via European cultures. The book offers first a fifty-page survey of the field by Christy and then meaty articles by experts in music, art, agriculture, poetry, religion, etc. The volume does not seem difficult, but it is so fact-filled that more than one reading is necessary for any comfortable feeling of mastery.

Sixty Million Jobs. By HENRY A. WALLACE. Simon & Schuster. \$1.00 (paper); \$2.00 (cloth).

First stating the thesis that none of us can be most prosperous unless all are employed at living wages, Wallace goes on to show by rather close argument how we can have full employment in the post-war years. Reads much like a corporation executive's report or a lawyer's brief.

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These readings, in the sequence here presented, have been enthusiastically read and discussed by college students with widely varying backgrounds and interests; they have proved not only effective for the development of skill in reading, writing, and speaking, but also a fertile source of written and oral composition topics. 436 pages, \$2.50

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